BROTHER JOHN

A TALE OF
THE FIRST FRANCISCANS

VIDA D. SCUDDER

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BY

VIDA D. SCUDDER

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1927

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Published May, 1927

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS PUBLICATIONS
ARE PUBLISHED BY
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Per crucem gaudium

This Book Is Dedicated
to
The Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross
and to All Those
Who Would Fain Learn
What Saint Francis Has to Teach the Modern World

PREFACE

THAT the thirteenth century, seen by a twentieth-century mind, is the real thirteenth century, who shall say? Yet life breathes from ancient records long perused. It certainly breathes from those Franciscan chronicles which give us in hints the story of the agitations and ecstasies that shook the disciples of Francis in the years after his death. For the spirit and ideals of the Saint have never died. Strangers and pilgrims, — *adveni et pellegrini*, in the phrase dear to his children, — they take their pilgrim way through the harsh confusion of all succeeding generations till our own. To follow them, especially in the first century after Francis' death, is a fascinating pursuit. A man who shares the present-day concern for the social paradoxes and implications of Christian faith will watch the varying attitudes of Lady Poverty's friends to questions of property and war, and to the whole imposing mediæval structure of Church and State, with a curious sense of fellowship. He will find the story quite enthralling in interest, humor, and suggestion.

The estimates formed concerning sundry men of his day by Brother John, the young English friar, as here presented, may not always be trustworthy. But they

appear to follow, down to fairly close detail, the many and delightful records, legendary and other, which have been left to us. That the book may hold some surprises for the student of these documents is perhaps to be expected. Brother John was, it will be realized, in a very feeble state when the recollections of his youth rose within him, and his memory may now and again have played him false. Moreover, these recollections are here presented by a reporter; and everybody knows the possible result when that happens. It would be captious to indicate such points. Yet in one regard, defense must be offered. The rhythmed meditations here indicated, as in the sixth chapter of Part II and the concluding chapter of Part III, are unknown to history till we find them associated with Brother Jacopone da Todi, that arresting poet, some time later than the death of Brother John in his Italian prison. But it does not stretch our imagination too far to conceive that the spiritual states which they express must have been familiar to the common life, in the mystical brotherhood of the sons of Francis, long before they were written down in formal verse.

VIDA D. SCUDDER

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PROLOGUE

BROTHER JOHN

A TALE OF THE FIRST FRANCISCANS

PROLOGUE

Brother John of England sat cramped in his cell, the clammy chill of an Italian Easter penetrating his manacled limbs. Outside, wayfarers hurrying to the first mass shivered and wrapped their cloaks around them. But cold without was nothing to the cold within, heritage as it were from a hundred winters. Damp oozed palpably from the heavy walls. There was scant light to reveal the unclean creatures which crawled over the floor, but they revealed themselves to touch and smell. Brother John laughed gently to himself. It was a pleasant laugh.

"There's Brother Gherardo singing again," said he. (Sensible men, if long imprisoned, get a comforting way of conversation with themselves.) "Blessed Father of ours, blessed Francis, do you not think your son Gherardo has a pretty good understanding of Perfect Joy?"

Through a crack in the masonry floated a voice. It blended with the gay clanging of Easter bells, audible even in the dungeon: —

"Our Splendor rested like a flower
Within the garden tomb,
And like a flower joyfully
Arose in radiant bloom."

The voice, though thin and tired, had a curious vibrant solemnity, although the melody was one that had drifted to Italy with the little love songs from Provence, popular for some years past. John took up the strain, and his tones were still sweet and resonant despite his forty-odd years and his evident weakness: —

"And in the garden lingering,
Still dwells He with His own,
Singing of love. O come and sing,
O cease to weep and moan!"

sang the two in unison, several other voices down the corridor joining faintly in.

Brother John drew a deep breath and began crooning to himself.

"Praised be our Lord God," he crooned, "for the good joy of Brother Gherardo.

"Praised be our Lord God for the humility and patience of Brother Piero and Brother Leonardo, who are with us in this prison; and for our knowledge of Thy hidden Mysteries.

"Praised be our Lord God for the cold and damp of this prison; for these vermin that devour my habit,

and for the sour bread the jailer will presently bring us for our Easter fare.

"Praised be our Lord God for our brother and father John of Parma, and for the true love of Holy Poverty which is in him, that hath caused him to be cast down from the seat of power.

"Praised be our Lord God —" and Brother John's face shone of a sudden. "Praised be our Lord God for those who have entered into Thy rest: for my friend beloved, Pierre; and for Brother Cæsar of Spires, for his joy in Paradise, and the look he cast on me at the moment of his martyrdom."

He paused a moment; and now his mouth twitched a little wryly.

"Praised be our Lord God for the great learning and the charming ways of Brother Bonaventura, and for his sincere belief that he does Thee service by keeping us in this prison.

"Blessed are they who pardon one another for Thy Love's sake, for Thou, O Most Highest, shalt give them a crown."

On these last words, from the Lauds of his father Saint Francis of Assisi, John rose painfully to his feet, and lifted hands and face toward the dripping vault. He spoke with new solemnity: —

"Praised be our Lord God for that He doth feed with all spiritual sweetness those who are shut away from His altar.

"I believe in poor Christ Crucified. I believe that He, as far as He was mortal man and wayfarer, showed

with His apostles the Way of Perfection: that they possessed nothing personally as by right and civil lordship, but for the use alone — the use alone.

"Poor Christ Crucified, give me grace to follow to the end."

His fettered hand made clumsily the sign of the cross in the air, and he ended, very low: —

"Praised be our Lord God for our sister the Death of the Body, whom I think I soon shall meet."

The very flesh, as he spoke, had been concentrated on these acts of devotion; the sallow face and emaciated body were flexible instruments of the soul. They failed him now; his limbs weakened, his countenance grew wan; he fell feebly to the ground. There was silence in the prison.

Outside, the weather was clearing. The sun shone a white pearl. The town itself lay like a dimmer pearl upon its hill, while the faint azure of the sky showed through delicate drifting mists like Madonna's mantle through her filmy veil. Cold did not lessen within, but on the wall of John's cell, pale, wavering, yet growing ever more distinct, appeared a circle of white light. Sunshine it was not, but a ray of reflected sun that in bright weather made its way through a window high in the thick stones of the outer wall. John, lifting his faint head, caught sight of it, and new strength was in his voice as he chanted: —

"Praised be our Lord God for our brother the Sun; fair is he and shines with a very great splendor. O Lord God, he signifies to us, Thee."

That pale small round of silver light would on bright days move for three or four hours softly across the wall. Such days are not many in March. This Holy Week past, never once had the sun been courteous at the right time to comfort John. That on this Easter morning the circle shone, first dim, then fair, seemed to him a special grace, a holy sign.

Five long years of withdrawal from the sweet light of earth had been neither dull nor unfruitful to Brother John. Since he had been clapped into prison in 1254 with Gherardo di San Donnino, after the publication of Gherardo's book on the Everlasting Gospel of Joachim da Flores, he had been fully occupied with that ever-changing drama which centres in the stern disciplines of the interior life; and by voluntary acceptance of harsh conditions he had risen into the highest dignities of freedom. Nevertheless, imprisonment pressed hard on him, as on any son of Francis. For he had taken the fair world for his convent, eschewing monkish seclusion in the free vagabondage of love. His hermit refuges had been eyries perched on the mountain side. In slime, in perpetual darkness, in the dead air of the prison, he had drooped like his sister larks when caught in a cage. He was a more living man, in spirit, than when he had been thrown into this cell; but the stamp of a suffering nigh to exhaustion was on his face.

His best outward help had been this circle of light. Gazing on it by the hour as it shifted with the changing year, he had been able, as in no other way, to attain

the desired surrender to union with Eternal Love. His breath subdued to a long even rhythm, his eyes half closed, his movements stilled, on his knees, with arms uplifted toward that little light, he lost himself in prayer, which soon passed beyond thought and merged into repetition of one word — *amor*, perhaps: *amor*, *amor*, *amore*. So he would gaze till the spirit was set free from the prison of the body. Then would thrill within his breast a well-known, welcome warmth; then would rise the *canor*, the impulse toward melody which he shared with his comrade Gherardo. Last came the holy hush, the sense of *nichilitade*, of blessed Naughting, that cessation of being which was its fulfillment, the consummate satisfaction to his need.

Brief, like all high experience, the blessed moment always passed. But as the spirit drew again within the flesh it would become aware of evasive faint lights from another world. Did they rise from within? Were they born of the message sent by the holy sun into the gloom of the cell? John never knew. Insights into reality flashed upon him. Strange images of things to come flowed past, blurred, yet mighty. His spirit entered into the mysteries, knew the freedom of the City of God.

Only when his circle gleamed had such initiations been vouchsafed. At some seasons no ray of reflected light penetrated the cell; often for weeks murk would prevail in the morning, and his famished eyes would crave in vain the shining on the wall which was prelude to the inward light. This Lent had been a time

of sirocco. But joy had returned with the Resurrection dawn.

"Love that guards the sheltering heart,
Gladsome wound, delightful pain,
Limitless thy blessed smart,
Limitless my glorious gain —"

Brother Gherardo was singing once more. Surely this Festival of Life would bring to Brother John some new revelation from eternity!

But capricious are the visits of Love, and never at the beck and call of desire. The imperative mood puts them to flight; and expectation of vision is almost sure to defeat its own end. The touch of impatience or curiosity, still more the taint of greed, is fatal in these high matters. On this same day, in this same prison, another brother, faint with long fasting for the Bread of Life, was miraculously fed by the heavenly manna containing in itself all sweetness. To John of Sanfort no such blessing was vouchsafed. In his very surrender was there perhaps some hint of arrogance, some impulse to coerce the Divine Will into gratifying his desires?

Brother John, although far from being a saint, was a sincere and holy man. He had moreover from childhood been much alive, not only to the things of earth, but to finer facts beyond the realms of sense. But neither his prison years nor sharp preceding disciplines had set him free from subtle weaknesses. For that matter, the wind of the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, and of its comings and goings no man can tell.

In vain he knelt with arms uplifted toward that light, in vain wooed with long rhythmic breath the warmth kindled from life's central fire. In vain he listened till silence should fulfill itself in song. No song rose to his lips, no warmth revived him. Cold, deaf, and sad, his earth-bound body knelt.

Yet, in one sense, the soul achieved a victory. The deathly weakness which had overswept him ebbed away. He felt the rhythm of his breath and blood one with the rhythm of all growing things, nay, with the ordered dancing of the stars. It was not vouchsafed him in this hour to know himself initiate of eternity; he moved within the horizons of time. But these horizons expanded backward; they encircled all his past. Memory, the great magician, was the ruler of the hour. And with memory came turmoil. Images raced through his brain, now broken and befogged, now sharp and clear. No longer, as it seemed, rising from his mind, they moved in authentic life, visible to the eye, audible to the ear, within that circle of light.

In anguish of penitence, in tender recollection, in aspiration and in gratitude renewed, Brother John of Sanfort, under the spell of memory, beheld his youth pass by.

PART ONE

THE NOVICE

I

IN THE FOREST

West of England, Christmas Eve, 1236. Snow falling heavily in the forest, changing to fantastic shapes the hollies and the ivy wreaths around the oak trees. Flakes whirling, stinging, trails hard to discern: a cold, unkindly world. Young Lord John of Sanfort suspected that he was behaving like a fool. Young Lord John was richly attired, but furs and festive array did not serve to warm his blood. It had been hot enough an hour ago, when he had run away from the feast in the great hall of his castle just as the Yule log was brought in, and wilder jokes were cracked, and gayety rose high around the blazing hearth. John had been the merriest there, the centre of the revels. Suddenly he had evaded, had sought the forest path all but blindly, had trodden it with swift dogged steps, pleased to escape, glad when the castle lights had vanished, finding welcome fellowship in snow and wind.

But that was an hour ago. In his haste, though he had thrown a mantle around him, he had neglected to

bring gloves; and smarting fingers could not be ignored. The thought of return crept into his mind, and brought a sickening sense of futility. Why had he dashed into the night? Merriment and adulation were waiting him at home, and the good sense of leadership; mere craving for physical comfort drew him back. Yet he could not forget the fierce distaste for all that which had surged under his defiant mirth till it had overflowed him of a sudden. What could he do with this misery within, that turned all pomps and comforts into pain? Prayers trembled in his heart, but found no words.

He was haunted by an eaten face — a horrible degradation which consigned the sufferer to solitude and loathsome pain. And blending with this image was Another, strangely related, the Image of a Cross and of One hanging thereon. "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men —" the words rang in John's ears.

Back in the castle the Christmas music was gay. In other years it had been sweet to John. To-night it seemed a mockery. He shook impatient shoulders.

"Bowers in Bethlehem would have none of Him," he thought bitterly, "nor would ours if He came again. We gather sated round the blaze, and sing in honor of the Homeless One. What fellowship is ours with the Manger?"

Here in the bleak forest he was better than in hall. But he knew not why he came nor what he sought. The trail grew blinder as the snow fell faster. John

stopped. The silence was unbroken by bird notes, or by the gentle summer motion of living air among living leaves. Only now and then a burden of snow would fall with a thud — a sound of death, not life. Not even a branch crackled.

Lord John was very young, and quite unhappy. He thought of all cold creatures in the world, beasts, birds, his own peasants, huddled in huts where windows had to let in cold if they were to let in light. Their chill became to him a symbol; he felt the world a lonely place. Back at the castle, how bright the torches blazed! This, or the castle feast! And still in his perverseness he chose this.

Young Lord John of Sanfort suspected that he was behaving like a fool. He wished to empty his spirit of life, as the forest was emptied. He drove that haunting music in his mind away; then returned that hideous face with running sores, with suppliant eyes, with mouth that mumbled prayers. Illness in any form had ever been abhorrent to John —

The frozen suspension of thought seemed to have gone on forever. In fact, his meditations had probably not lasted three minutes, and all the time he was cynically conscious that, having savored discomfort, loneliness, negation for a little, he would probably go back to the castle and play the merry host; yet that the blaze of the Yule log would not melt the ice deep in the well of his heart. He was certainly two miles or more within the wood, but he seemed to hear a far echo of that Christmas music. "It is time I went

back," thought John; "my hearing deceives me. I begin to be in peril from this cold."

He was further bewildered in a moment, for through the quiet an extraordinary sound reached him — a laugh, not loud, but happy. Roused from his apathy, John held his breath.

> (In the prison cell of the Italian town, that laugh rose and fell to the ears of the old friar.)

Presently he knew that he had not imagined the singing. The melody drew nearer — two voices, blended in a Christmas sequence, solemn and lovely. The singers came dimly in sight, stumbling along the almost buried trail. They were dressed in the rough gray cloth worn by peasants, their feet were bare, their silhouette suggested woodcutters; but that they were no men of low birth John perceived at once from the dignity of their gait, particularly that of the younger. They were talking now — one with an English slightly twisted on his tongue.

"It was not quite so cold as this, that night at Greccio."

"And did you see the blessed babe come to life in his arms?"

"I was far behind, in crowd and shadow. I did not see. But I heard a baby cry, and hush its wail as if someone had fondled it; and I saw the women start."

They were close now, and paused as if amazed at the sight of this richly dressed young man, leaning against a tree.

"Sieur," said the elder, speaking now in French, "Peace be with you. Can you tell us the way to shelter?"

The night had lightened; the storm was passing. John noted the extreme thinness of their attire. The younger man coughed — it was a racking cough.

"Yes!" he said eagerly: "You are between the castle of Sanfort and the Benedictine monastery of Minster. To which would you go? The castle is nearer."

"To us it is all one, if we may work for our lodging and hear our Christmas mass," said the Frenchman. For that he was French John realized from the pure tongue of France he spoke, differing from the curious Anglo-French current among the upper classes in the British Isles.

"Work you shall not; but lodging you shall have, and we can reach home in time for the mass of midnight," exclaimed John, and turned back with them toward the castle.

"We eat not unless we work, if work is to be had, and Brother Lawrence is a famous artisan," said the Englishman gayly, with chattering teeth. "If we can find no work, then we beg, and eat with thankfulness. Warmth!" — and again the cough seized him, while the wind blew out his rough, thin greyning garment. With sudden impulse, John took off his heavy furred mantle.

"Alas! It is but one, and you are two," he said, holding it out, standing himself in his surcoat, graceful and alert as a young deer.

The two men had stopped in surprise; a look of sweet gladness came into their faces.

"But you need your mantle," said the Frenchman gently. "Would you strip yourself in this bitter cold?"

"And could I stay in these furs, do you think, and see you shiver?" queried John indignantly. "If only I had more than one! — Wait! Here are high boots, fur-lined." Impetuously he pulled them off and held them out, hesitating, to the Frenchman. He had just noticed little flecks of blood along the track of both pair of naked feet.

"You see I still have these warm hosen," said he; "and you with your feet bare!"

The two men had looked at each other in surprise. But now the Frenchman, who was the elder, clasped the mantle around the neck of the other, pushed him, laughing, horrified, protesting, against a tree, picked up his feet with decision, first one, then the other, and drew the boots upon them.

"Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," he sang. "Blessed be our Lord God for the love in the hearts of men."

John was abashed. He had joined instinctively in the Gloria; the weight was gone from his heart.

"Brother Lawrence, what are you doing?" cried the Englishman. His shivering was less; he had drawn the great furs round him with much content. But now he fumbled at their clasp. "You know well, we are not permitted —" he stammered.

"Would you deny this youth the joy of giving?" asked the other, laughing still; and then, more gravely, "By holy obedience, Brother Richard, keep them all on. And remember the words of the Rule: '*In tempore manifestæ necessitatis faciant omnes fratres de eorum necessariis, sicut Dominus eis gratiam largietur, quia necessitas non habet legem.*' I do not care to have you add Brother Fever to our company. He knows too well the company of that brother," he added, turning to John, "therefore he shall wear what you offer; but not for long. As soon as we meet another who needs them more, you will be glad, I trust, to have Brother Richard give them away. For we who are the Lesser Brothers, little poor men, sons of Brother Francis, do not long wear furred coats and high fur boots."

"Oh ho, I have heard of you!" John cried. "Are you of those strange men who have stirred all England to question? My uncle, sub-prior at Minster, thinks you mad."

"There was one who was a fool for Christ's sake," said Brother Lawrence. Brother Richard executed a little caper in his new boots, and broke into a snatch of Italian song:—

"Senno mi pare e cortesia
Empazzir per lo bel Messia."

"Which is as much as to say," interpreted Lawrence, laughing a little, "that it is wisdom and courtesy to be crazed for Jesus Christ."

"Sing, let us sing, Brother Lawrence; my heart is full of song," Richard was crying; and the two fell into a full-voiced chant: —

"Praised be our Lord God for our sister the moon, and for the stars, the which He has set clear and lovely in heaven," sang the strangers, and set forth, with John as their guide. Snow no longer fell. The forest had wakened strangely to life with the rising of the wind which, not felt below, yet caused the trees above to speak loudly, and drove scudding clouds between which the moon shone on the whiteness in a dazzle of glory. Every now and then a star, brilliant enough to maintain itself even in the moonlit sky, darted its ray through the bare boughs. The three trudged on cheerily, but the others could scarce keep up with John's swinging strides, and Brother Richard stopped perforce at times while the cough racked him.

"Are there many as happy as you?" asked John in one of these pauses.

"All of us!" gasped Richard.

"Rest. Do not try to talk," Brother Lawrence adjured him, "and I will repeat a passage from the Rule. '*Et caveant sibi quod non ostendant se tristes sed ostendant se gaudentes in Domino, hilares, et convenienter gratiosos.*' Which is as much as to say that we are not to be dejected ourselves and depressing to others, but are to show that we rejoice in the Lord, and are full of hilarity. There! Richard can walk on now."

"And your numbers?" John repeated.

"Even here in England we must be close on a thousand. Twelve years ago we came. Well we remember those days, Brother Richard and I. He was a little fellow then, an acolyte only. There were three other clerics; the rest of us were lay. We were nine in all."

"And four of us went up to London," broke in Richard, panting but undaunted, "but you stayed at Canterbury, Brother Lawrence."

"First at the priest's hospice," Lawrence went on good-humoredly, motioning Richard to silence; "but soon they gave us a dark little room behind a schoolhouse. We used to stay there all day as if we were dangerous dogs, and creep out to the fire in the evening, when the scholars had gone home. Oh how sour the dregs of beer were, which we had to drink! It tastes good in memory, that beer."

"In London," Richard insisted on taking up the story, "the sons of Saint Dominic welcomed us first. But then we made ourselves little cells in Cornhill, all of mud and dried grass. And we had not any chapel, and the Pope had not yet given us the privilege of a portable altar. But before long we had gifts of land in Stinking Lane, near the shambles. And then Brother Richard of Ingworth and I went to Oxford."

"And now —" Brother Lawrence cut him short, "we are all over England, nay, and Scotland. London, Northampton, Gloucester, Lincoln, Salisbury — and still we grow. We two are come from our quite new little place, not yet really established, in Exeter.

We have been walking on an Advent mission through Devon."

"Do you find it always easy to obey that rule of joy?" John's voice was wistful as he stressed his question. But there was no need of answer in words, for he saw the look which the two friars cast at each other, and as he saw it, something strange happened within his heart.

"It is our joy, I think, that draws men to us," Brother Richard replied gently. "Why not? You see, we have to offer the two gifts that men most crave — love and liberty."

"But you live controlled, and under authority. You have convents of your own, I note, and a manner of life ordained," John ventured.

Brother Lawrence sighed. "Convent is too grand a word," said he; "little places, rather. 'Luoghi,' Francis always called our tiny houses."

"Still they really are convents, Brother," confessed Richard.

"I suppose so — yes," Brother Lawrence agreed. "We have houses — yes. But we sons of Francis like best to wander."

"Even when you wander into such cold weather as this, and miss your way?" asked John merrily.

"It was all my fault." Brother Richard was rueful. "I am of these parts — at least I am of Devon, and I thought I knew this forest. But the snow dazed me, and the years since I was here. Glad enough I was when we met you."

"Not so glad as I," ventured John with a touch of shyness. "With your coming, life returned to the world." There were few who could resist young Lord John when he smiled.

He paused, unaware that Lawrence was scrutinizing him keenly, lovingly; then resumed with a certain abruptness, turning to the older man: —

"Will you grant me a boon? Will you change garments with me when we reach the castle? and you shall say you met in the wood one who so bade you. For me, I will draw your hood over my eyes and hide me in the kitchen. Perhaps they will not know me there. Perhaps —" he paused, bewildered.

"My son," said Lawrence, searching, grave, "how came it that we found you in the forest?"

"Father, I will tell you," said John, strangely impelled to full confession. "I am lord of this small castle to which we are going. And I do not know why a Christian man, who serves One born in a stable, should be heir to a castle. And when I see any who lack when I abound, I feel myself a thief. And as I shared and led the Christmas festival, loathing came on me. My cousin was there to do the honors — and I fled away into the wood."

Lawrence waited, as if there were more to come.

"This morning," John went on very low, "I met a leper on the road. I have always hated to meet lepers. He begged. I tossed him an alms, but in horror and disgust. Father, I saw him read that horror in my eyes. And ever since, wherever I go, his face is with me."

"And not his only. It becomes Another Face before your eyes," said the friar with solemnity.

John started. "How did you know?" he stammered. And in a moment, wistfully again, "You will change with me?" he repeated.

"And to what end?"

John hesitated, sought his heart, spoke very slowly. "It is deep within me to live as poor men live, to follow Him born in a stable whithersoever He would lead. I am in chains. I would be free. Necessity is on me — Father, I do not know what works within. Tell me! Show me to myself! For it is borne in upon me that you know, and can."

Richard was a-quiver with eagerness. He was pressing near to John. But Lawrence checked him.

"Christ must tell you, not I," said he. Then, after brief silence: —

"Why do you not ask this boon from Richard, who already wears your cloak?"

"I do not know." John's obstinacy was plaintive. "It is yours of which I covet the touch."

Richard could not be restrained. "Father! Did you notice what he said about feeling himself a thief?" he cried. "Why, that was one of the great sayings of Brother Francis. And it was all out of this young man's own mind!" But neither John nor Lawrence was heeding him.

"You ask a great thing of me," mused Lawrence, fixing a severe gaze on the youth. "Francis himself gave me this habit, with a most sweet blessing. His

it was; his holy flesh has worn it. And he sent me back to England. Long ago this happened; the habit is old; there are more holes than cloth," and a smile twisted the stern lips into something very human; "but no other will I wear."

Brother Richard had dropped on his knees, and was kissing the frayed and very dirty hem of the garment; and John did likewise, his eyes full of tears, though of Brother Francis he knew but little at this time.

"I am less generous than Francis," said Lawrence, "and to no one on earth would I give this gift of his. But I will lend it to you for an hour, for I see that you have been led to ask for it in a holy mystery. You shall wear it at mass. But as for my wearing your surcoat," he went on, turning to lighter mood — and ran his hands over his not small bulk.

Brother Richard laughed aloud. "Would you ever think, to look at him, that he fasts more than I do?" he asked John; and Lawrence laughed too, a little ruefully. "I have noted that the girth of one's body has little to do with the quality of one's soul," said he. "I shall seek some servant's garment. We shall hear our mass together. We shall give thanks for Love newborn at Bethlehem, newborn in our hearts to-night. And we shall pray, all three of us, while the Holy Sacrifice is offered, for light upon your path."

In the chapel, the *Gloria in Excelsis* was chanting when three roughly dressed peasants slipped in and to their knees. They passed unnoticed in the crowd clad in russet and greyning, who stood and knelt behind the

gentry in their festal array. The glowing candles, the ascending clouds of incense, met their eyes in glimpses only. But ears shared what sight could not, the great words of the liturgy, and hearts bowed adoring before Love manifest in Bread. One, whose face was hidden in his hood, remained among the servitors and country folk till the last worshiper had departed. Then he too rose and quietly sought his companions, to whom the rough hospitality they were glad to accept had been tendered.

"Did you learn anything from your prayers, Brothers?" asked John simply.

Brother Richard replied, unchecked this time by Brother Lawrence. All three men were hushed by the great Mystery.

"I was not here," said he. "I was kneeling in the sanctuary dearest to us, the Church of the Little Portion in the Umbrian plain. And though that church is so small that Saint Francis could repair it with his own hands, yet there were thousands of us there. The hands of the little dark man who read the Gospel were pierced, and there was light around him. And as we knelt in the Creed when the Word was made flesh, I saw the face of the brother who knelt beside me. Brother, it was your face."

John kept his hood drawn close, his head bowed low. He did not speak.

"My inward eyes were not opened," said Brother Lawrence sadly. His face was troubled. "I saw nothing," he repeated, "but to my ears there rose and

fell a storm, fiercer than the wind in the treetops which we heard on our way hither. That storm was far, but it drew more near. Fear fell upon me."

He shook off with difficulty his brooding gloom. "And you, whom I would right fain call my son?" he asked, turning to John. But John kept silence.

"Did no message reach your soul?" queried Richard.

John threw back his hood. "I saw naught," said he softly; "but I heard a Voice. And what it said was secret, for me only."

He lifted the cord, which Brother Lawrence had not surrendered to him, and kissed it thrice.

"I am henceforth of your fellowship, my brothers," said young Lord John of Sanfort.

II

MONK AND FRIAR

In the week of Septuagesima, John, making his way over windswept sunny moors, knocked at the door of the priory which nestled in the descending hollow ten miles from his old home. Above the low gray buildings a peacock-colored sea shone faint and far. The February sun was mild. The tree trunks, richly draped in ivy, gave a semblance of summer to the protected coomb. The monastery was a home of lovely peace.

"The sub-prior?" he demanded of the porter.

"Brother Joseph must serve your need, my lad," returned the man with brusque familiarity; then, looking closer as John involuntarily drew himself up, "By 'r Lady! It is young Lord John!"

John wore the caperone of a Franciscan novice. In the long single garment of grising, with his bare feet, he looked like a workingman.

"Kindly tell my uncle that I am here," said he, with a slight surviving air of aristocratic authority, to the astonished porter. With a little annoyance, he saw the man's shoulders shake as he turned to comply.

Father Philip, a portly monk of fine brow and quiet

countenance, sat in a cell beautifully vaulted and severely bare. A choice manuscript of Cassiodorus was placed on a stand, to receive perfect light from a window giving on his tiny private garden. He raised his eyes humorously as John, looking very boyish, stood before him. But John fell on his knees.

"Bless me, my uncle," said he.

"My heart always blesses you, my dear lad," responded the sub-prior easily, with a note of amused affection. "But why a special blessing to-day? Is it because you have seen fit to dress yourself like a churl?"

John winced. "It is the sign of a new life!" he cried. "I did not expect you to laugh at me. I thought you would understand."

"Enlighten my obtuseness," said the monk, raising his eyebrows.

John's embarrassment vanished; his happiness mounted. "I wear the habit of the least of the Little Brothers who follow the blessed saint, Francis of Assisi," he said joyously. His uncle kept silence. His face was turned away. John reached out appealing hands.

"I have bidden farewell to that castle they called mine. Lady Poverty has called me and I have obeyed. I shall not feel like a thief any longer, and on the other hand, no thief can bother me. '*Cantabit vacuus*,' that is my lady's watchword. My brothers love to say it. Rejoice with me, my uncle!" John's words tumbled over one another in his exhilaration.

His uncle made an impatient gesture. "Rejoice?"

said he sharply. "Because you have joined a company of lazy vagabonds? Because you have abandoned your just rights, not to speak of your duties, to your cousin Henri?"

John, disappointed, gathered himself together. It was with dignity that he replied: "Have you too not renounced possessions, and embraced poverty?"

His words were perhaps a little ingenuous, for as he spoke, the contrast between the noble Benedictine monastery and the mean little house he had left at Exeter flashed through his mind. To be frank, the monastery smelled clean. Father Philip's plain habit was of fine texture. John knew well that, it being a Friday, the monks would soon sit down to a dinner of fresh-caught fish. Perhaps this contrast was present to the other also, for he was surveying the boy with a quizzical look in which annoyance blended with a subtle sadness.

"My dear lad, if a vocation for renunciation and the religious life rose within you, why did you not come to me?" he asked softly.

John hesitated. A sense of humor was not one of his strongest assets, but a spasm of inward laughter seized him, and involuntarily he looked around at the commodious cell. Father Philip was a sensitive man. It was with some stress of voice that he went on.

"John, you are the son of my heart. You shall know that heart to-day. Although you are acceptable in the world, and good at its ways, I have long been assured that you were not meant for life in its turmoil.

It has been my cherished dream to have you here beside me in the cloister."

"I never thought —" John stammered, taken by surprise.

"Was it for me to speak to you before the Spirit spoke? But ever since that day you must remember, when you fainted in the jousts because you had inadvertently drawn blood, I have known the knightly life was not for you, in spite of your vigorous body. And the cares of possessions, over which Henri your cousin and heir would gloat so greedily, would be only misery to you. Your heart, like mine, turns to the way of peace."

He rose, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Leave these mountebanks. Come hither to Minster," he urged. "Here is peace. Here is freedom."

"Freedom?" mused John.

"Am I not free?" his uncle asked, surprised. He glanced lovingly at his manuscript. "True," he added conventionally, "I wear the yoke of holy obedience."

"I too have assumed that yoke, though I do not yet know what it means," interposed John.

"It means a great relief," said his uncle frankly. "There is nothing so irksome as making decisions. It is delightful to be released from that necessity. Obedience, to the monk, is the very safeguard of freedom."

"Ease is not freedom," John murmured under his breath. But the sub-prior was continuing with enthusiasm.

"What presses on me, aside from the light duties of my office? Here I live, fed and sheltered, relieved from the anxious cark of property and, what is more, from the necessity of killing my fellow men or the risk of being killed by them. With these precious manuscripts, among thoughts high and holy, in round of prayer and praise, my years are passed. All the troubles and uncertainties of this anguished world we monks have escaped."

"And is that freedom?" asked John.

The sub-prior looked puzzled. "How otherwise?" he queried.

John's brows were bent. "I am confused," he sighed. "Escape — yes, it is sweet. I crave it. Yet the deep calling unto the deep within me seeks no escape. I would not flee the anguished world. Ah, no, I would embrace it."

"The world is allied to the Devil," said the monk shortly. "Renounce it if you would attain reality."

"God so loved the world that He sent His Son to save it," John returned musing. "And the one reality is love."

"Love the world? Why then, marry; beget children; hold your property and administer it like a gentleman."

The lad's brow flushed. "My soul is athirst," he cried, "for love without desire — such love as Francis knew, singing lauds of the creatures. The meek, the meek inherit. I think one cannot love and own. Are we meek, in my family?"

Father Philip smiled in spite of himself. Before his mind rose a race of haughty men, high-bred, rejoicing in the clash of arms, and cheerfully adding to their possessions at the point of the sword. But John was going on relentlessly: —

"For that matter, how about you monks? Your community is rich and strong. You are sheltered; I would follow One who was shelterless. You are fed; I would be one with all the hungry. You live secure in this fat and pleasant priory; my new brothers wander over the world, ignorant of security, sharing the common lot, begging their way or earning it by their labor."

Father Philip's anger broke out. "Pestilent trouble breeders!" he cried.

"True men of peace!" John was getting excited too.

"No more dangerous person than your so-called man of peace when he tries to stay in the world. He imperils the foundations of society." And as John stared, bewildered, Father Philip went on: —

"The respectable world of organized religion dreads these wretched men. The parish priests hate them, for they lure penitents away. We monks hate them, for they settle their disreputable hovels on monastery lands, as now at Scarborough. They stir men up against their lawful lords and are always on the side of the rabble. They are turning the world upside down."

"So did the Apostles before them," John interposed. But his uncle's speech flowed on.

"The underbred louts! They wander from nation to nation, landless men, embracing lepers, encouraging heresies, promoting marriages; they crack unseemly jokes. If they settle, it is in the worst quarter of the town. My dear John, poverty need not mean bad taste."

At this climax, as the monk paused, out of breath, John interrupted merrily: "You are certainly right about some things. If you could only smell our little place at Exeter! As for jokes, we have only to look at each other to burst out laughing."

Father Philip made a gesture of disgust. But John went on, in serious mood: —

"Dear uncle, I shall be as frank as you. Do you know why I have never wished to be a monk? It is because I see you seeking at once the perquisites of surrender and of possession. You think you know security, but if this priory burned over your head —"

A cloud swept Father Philip's forehead. "As for security," he interrupted, "alas, the dissolution of this house of peace and prayer is at this moment threatened."

John was moved to illogical sympathy. "Oh, my uncle! On what grounds?" he inquired.

"That we are an alien foundation," sighed the subprior. "We exist, as you know, under the Mother House in Burgundy. It seems the King will not allow the most modest possessions to be held under foreign allegiance."

"Did I not tell you so?" John clapped his hands.

"Possession! Possession! The primal curse, the mother of sorrows!"

"Curse man cannot escape — as your crazy brothers will discover." The response was tart. But John went on unheeding.

"Do you look at me in distress, dear uncle, because your claims on this pleasant glebe are challenged? Fie, fie! Why take thought for the morrow? Never should I see that worried look on the face of a son of Francis."

"John, stop this folly!" Father Philip's heart was in the look he bent on his nephew. "If we monks find security, however precarious, by renouncing private ownership in favor of communal, have we done amiss? We have sought the Kingdom of God; and these other things have been added unto us. Remember what monks have meant to Holy Church! Wastes reclaimed, learning fostered, the sick cared for, the soul preserved. We have found an ordered life within that ceaseless predatory struggle that cannot end while man is man. In our blessed refuge liberty and brotherhood abide. Cease your cheap cavil!"

"I did not come to cavil," John faltered. "I came for fellowship."

"It waits you here." Father Philip reached out appealing hands.

"Would you have me speak of hidden things?" said he. "I may not. I dare not. But trust me; come to the cloister. The world deceives; it has lures manifold; the monk resists these lures unto the end. No

easy life is here. Our only safety is in flight from sense. In desperate haste, in ceaseless vigilance, that flight occupies our years."

For a moment the monk entered into contemplative silence.

"Abandon this hysterical performance, John," he urged presently. "Stay here with me. I take upon myself all explanations."

"You summon me," John was speaking slowly, "to a surrender of all that I most dislike, that I may gain all I most covet." His eyes sought a crucifix hanging over the table. "I have heard another Voice," said he, very low. "My uncle, do not seek to hold me," he pleaded after a pause. "You too have heard that Voice, I know. It calls us to different paths. But, for me, I cannot forget that it is the Voice of One who did not withdraw from the world's turmoil, who worked at the carpenter's bench, who frequented weddings, who feasted with publicans and sinners — of One," John looked grave, "One who died condemned by the law."

Father Philip had risen, had turned sulkily aside. "I scent heresy," he muttered.

"We are loyal sons of Holy Church." John spoke with spirit.

The monk shrugged his shoulders. "I know more than you do about your new brothers. Your precious Agnellus procured a decretal, dispensing your friars from any episcopal authority."

"A decretal comes from the Holy Father himself,

does it not?" asked John naïvely. "We are his true knights."

"And he will want you to turn monks with the rest of us. Wait and see!" Father Philip was still bitter.

John tossed his head in impatient denial, and, brushing perplexities away, went on boyishly: —

"I keep trying to tell you about us, and you will not listen. Now last night we were so jolly! Brother Richard had brought back some beans from his quest. There was a little very sour beer, and Brother Thomas had some crusts from a dog's portion. I got them all laughing, telling of the dishes served for supper at the castle. Brother Thomas had been driven away with sticks from the farmhouse where they tossed him the crusts, but Brother Gilbert, who is a doctor, had helped a poor woman in labor. Brother Lawrence had been working at a forge and making friends with the blacksmith. He used to be a lawyer in the world, but he has learned smithing. I can hardly wait till they send me out questing. And what trade shall I learn?"

Father Philip turned on him almost fiercely: "The Sieur de Sanfort! A vagrant and a laughingstock of peasants!"

John rose buoyantly on his toes. "Blessed are ye when men revile you —" he looked mischievously at his uncle. "Those words used to worry me, but when you abuse my brothers and me they bring me joy and consolation."

The sub-prior threw out his hands in despair. "Enough, enough!" he cried. "Am I to be patient

all the morning, listening to your perversions of Scripture? Go, John! Follow your willful way. You will find many a pitfall, you and your mad brethren, and I think some day you will return to me."

Love was in his eyes, and John fell on his knees once more. "We have wrangled," he sighed. "And I came to you for your blessing."

Father Philip laid his hand on the boy's head. "My blessing will I not withhold," said he with painful tenderness. "You are foolish. But there is, I know, a folly that confounds the world. Who am I, who are you or your Francis, to claim to see clear the narrow way of salvation? The Lord bless thy going out and thy coming in. Go forth in peace."

"In the Name of God, Amen. Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee," John responded.

"It is you I have blessed, not your wild notions," called Father Philip, as John vanished through the door.

III

MEMORIES OF SAINT FRANCIS

That smell in the Franciscan quarters at Exeter, which John had mentioned, was much in evidence. The mean little place, huddled within the town walls among the poorest people, was a curious contrast to the castle of Sanfort. John, usually of a fastidious turn, reveled romantically in this contrast and in his natural distastes. Still more romantic was his joy in intercourse with his resident brothers. There were only four of them, for the tiny settlement was very new indeed and some years were to pass before it became a permanent foundation. But the four were men who might never have met under ordinary social conditions, and they took rare relish in one another's company. The sense of loneliness which had pursued John from childhood was quite in abeyance for a time.

Brother Lawrence of Beauvais had, as John had told Father Philip, been a lawyer in the world. Brother Richard of Devon, a delicate man and a dreamer, was the only Englishman beside John. Brother Gilbert, the physician, was a merry, sensible Dutchman; he did

more than any other of the group to keep the community tone normal. The fourth was Brother Thomas, and he was a person of difficult temperament. His father was Italian, his mother Scotch, and a touch of Scotch dourness blended with Italian intensity in his nature. Brother Thomas was in charge of the little practical affairs of the group, and he took them hard. His tragic features only now and then underwent transformation in the sunshine of the Franciscan mirth. It was a favorite pursuit of the others to make Brother Thomas laugh, and their gay affection would now and then prevail; for they were very gay at Exeter, meeting life, now as a joke, now as a challenge, always as an adventure. John, who had been an overserious young man, had never known anything like this hilarity. In the dismal little room where they would gather at night for talk and prayer, the impatient sense of restraint, which had saddened his youth, yielded to the reviving assurance that he had received the freedom of the City of God.

Different though these brothers were in origin, they had one thing in common. They all stood to lose by entering the Order. The fact perplexed John a little.

"Can you tell me, brothers, why so many lawyers are joining our religion? More every year, I 'm told," said he one evening.

The humorous wrinkles sharpened in Lawrence's fine French face. "I surmise," replied he, "that it is because we of all men are most intimate with those property interests which are the chief enemies of Lady

Poverty, and familiarity breeds contempt. It was so with me, I know. The day came, and suddenly, when I saw that the threads binding men to those interests were spun in hell, I could no longer help in that spinning."

"I did not feel that my old interests were wrong," reflected Brother Gilbert. "I am glad of my skill as a leech when I chance in questing on households where there are grievous maladies. But I joined our fellowship because it was pain and grief to me to receive reward — especially cold reward of lucre — for the offices of love."

"It seems strange to me," ventured John shyly, "that there are so few of us who have been intimates of Lady Poverty from childhood. All I have met come from lives like yours, or from selling merchandise like Father Francis. And I hear of others bred like myself to the trade of killing. There are several Englishmen of rank, I know: a de Gobion, a Gernegan. Brother Richard was telling me this morning of one, Sir Benvenuto in Italy, who always chose to serve the brothers in the kitchen. But where are the ploughmen among us?"

"There was one, a real ploughman," interposed Richard eagerly. "I have heard merry tales of him. He entered the religion drawn by love of Father Francis, and such was his zeal to follow that precious life that he sneezed when Francis sneezed, coughed when he coughed, till the dear Father could not stand it any longer."

John laughed with the rest, but did not quite like the story. "Have we none less simple, from those humble folk who must hold the very treasure of wisdom?"

Two started to reply at once. "Brother Juniper, the cobbler," Richard was saying, laughing still; but Lawrence of Beauvais had the right of way.

"Love never cares to be constrained," said he. "We should not so love poverty had it been forced on us instead of our choosing it."

"That is a hard saying, Brother Lawrence," returned Gilbert the physician. "I have known men born in her fellowship who accept it gladly and sweetly, and know her hidden favors as well as you or I."

"Brother Giles! Brother Giles!" shouted Richard; and Lawrence nodded cheery assent. "The third Brother," he explained to John. "He is living now at Monte Ripido near Perugia. He is a crabbed old workman, and a great contemplative. Ah, John, blessed will you be if you see some day that holy man! You may find him so rapt that the very children in the street make fun of him; or he may be digging among his vegetables; or he may be saying things amazingly wise. There is no talk like Giles'. And how he does insist on working with his hands!"

"I thought we all did that," John reflected.

"We should. Francis enjoined it. The Rule and especially the Testament are explicit on this point. Wherefore I learned smithing."

"But the brothers grow careless. Sometimes I

think too many learned men are joining us. They say manual work is so hard to combine with study." This was Richard.

"Giles is never careless," Lawrence went on, a trifle hurriedly. "I have met him in Ancona, carrying waterpots on his head. I have seen him take a hand in the harvest or help in any odd job."

"There are really several other workingmen in the Order," said Gilbert.

"Brother Elias, for instance. He was a mattress maker before he was a schoolmaster." Brother Thomas, who had not spoken before, threw this remark in dryly; and therewith a constrained silence fell on the group. John had noted the same thing before when the name of that brother was mentioned.

John soon discovered that being a friar was in one sense a very prosaic affair. The brothers might sing lauds like their sisters the larks, but they soared in spirit only, for their feet trod dusty ways. All day they moved about casually among the rough crowds of the poorer population, nor did they reserve the subtle privilege of consorting with men as would-be helpers. They were suppliants rather, actually subsisting on the alms of the poor, and thereby achieving an identity with the common people which he alone can know who comes to them with empty hands. Physical needs pressed on them sharply — they suffered as their neighbors suffered from hunger and cold. Poverty was no pose or gesture. It was a harsh and homely fact. When Brother Richard was prostrated by his

recurrent ague, the others would lie close to him, "as is the manner of pigs," remarked Brother Gilbert cheerfully, to keep him warm. John, picking his way painfully with cracked and bleeding feet on the rough streets, could not forget his good rides on blooded horses; like most young gentlemen of his day, he had been more at home in the saddle than on foot. Now he adapted himself to Saint Francis' pony, *il cavallo di San Francesco*, exulting in moving level with his fellow men instead of on an eminence above them. From this angle he seemed to discover their reality for the first time.

To be a friar did not mean to be rapt all the time in religious meditation. It meant working, or begging, for your dinner.

"I spoke sharply to-day," groaned the taciturn Brother Thomas, at the informal chapter of faults which was held every evening after supper. "A monk on the street called after me, 'You greedy lout!' and I flung at him, 'You well-fed loafer!' " Thomas covered his face with his hands. But a chuckle ran round the room. The questing had not been oversuccessful that day, and the brothers had just finished a particularly meagre and unpleasant repast, composed of broken bits.

"Food, food, always food!" sighed the physician, Brother Gilbert. "Brother John, you must have had more time for prayer at your castle, where meals fell like manna from heaven before the young seigneur."

"Perhaps; but I did not use it," returned John,

smiling, yet thoughtful. "Someone had to think about the providing. I wonder if their care poisoned my freedom."

"It is easier to scorn dinner when one is full than when one is empty," Gilbert went on, plaintively.

"John, my son, tell us what has been in your mind to-day," asked Brother Lawrence. It was the first day that John had been allowed to go questing — which may have been one reason for the scarcity of the supplies.

"Gratitude," replied John.

Perhaps the answer sounded a trifle perfunctory, for Lawrence shrugged his French shoulders, and John hurried to go on, talking quickly.

"I don't mean what you think. I had not in mind gratitude to God just then, but gratitude to men, who carry the tremendous labors necessary to feed us — labors I had never dreamed of, in my castle. And then also, gratitude to the beasts. To vegetables also, if you will, especially to beans." A shout of merriment interrupted him — beans were a wearisome staple in Franciscan diet. "But chiefly," John continued calmly, "chiefly to the beasts. In particular to our brother the pig. I had not known all men owed to that unlovely brother."

Brother Gilbert was sighing deeply. "Brother Pig is a sad tempter," said he. "It is hard even on fast days to resist your English bacon. To tell truth, I do not always resist. Yesterday, on a Friday, at the farm where I had earned my dinner by good labor,

they offered me bacon and I ate it. Only the three consecutive mouthfuls we are allowed, but I made them large mouthfuls. And I do not confess this as a fault. Other food there was none; my host would have been chagrined had I refused. I knew I was sure to be hungry enough before the week was out, and I ate that bacon. Oh I know that our brothers the sons of Saint Dominic would have gloated over me, horrified."

A babel of excited voices rose at this avowal. "I do not gloat, but I am horrified," Brother Thomas the Italian was saying. He had risen, and his sallow face was severe. John reflected that those who, like Thomas, observed abstinence most strictly were not always the easiest people to live with.

"Have you forgotten how Saint Francis mortified the body? How he scattered ashes on his food?" Brother Thomas went on.

"There were no ashes handy," returned Gilbert, unabashed; "and I have not forgotten how he said that the law of kindness was more imperative than any other."

"If we claim such freedom, looseness of life, self-deception, self-indulgence, will be upon us in a moment." Thomas was speaking with sombre heat.

"Brother," asked Gilbert gently, "why do you so distrust the spirit which has led us to count the world well lost for poverty?"

"Because," Thomas returned, very grim, "I know too well that strict observance of vows and severe corporal disciplines are necessary to protect our poor hearts against their fierce weakness."

"Bishop Grossteste, our great friend, says that three things are essential to temporal health: to eat, sleep, and be merry," countered Gilbert. "*Cibus*, *somnus*, *jocus*."

"And I have heard Brother Albert of Pisa, our minister, say," contributed Richard, "that when he was in a hospital with Francis, the saint made him eat twice as much as he was accustomed to do."

"He told the people of Greccio," Gilbert added, "'You think me a saint, but I have eaten chicken all this Advent.' However, that was to prevent people from honoring him, and the dear Father could find nothing else of which to accuse himself."

Brother Lawrence had not been paying much attention to the talk; but now he roused. "The blessed Francis," he said quietly, "was chiefly concerned not to have us notice whether we ate or not, following holy poverty in that we have no certitude from day to day about either food or shelter. He would not have us worry fussily about such points, or weaken ourselves by hesitation as to right in minor matters. Brother Bernard, the first companion, is very like him in these respects."

"Lack of certitude! That is surely the best way for us Little Brothers to share the experience of our brothers the poor," reflected John.

And now a flood of memories was let loose, and one told how Francis had abundance of good food brought in the middle of the night, when a half-starved brother had wakened the others, crying that he was dying, and

how all had feasted together. And of the other time when Francis and a companion were out walking, and Francis leaped into a vineyard and plucked ripe grapes, and the two sat on the wall and ate them, rejoicing.

"Our Father was never more himself than in his delicacy and his exquisite refusal to hurt people's feelings," said Brother Richard.

"None the less, he was very severe to Brother Body," Thomas insisted.

"Too severe!" said Brother Gilbert. "He did not stay on earth his appointed span. Yet, in his heart, it was ever love came first."

"Nevertheless," Lawrence ended the talk with a touch of severity; "love is not to be confused with laxity. Let us all be on our guard. Remember how Francis dubbed the lazy brother with a good appetite Brother Fly, because the man could only eat and talk. And he drove him out of the Order."

So with a smile the talk stopped for that time. But every evening it ran free and happy, full of anecdote, fun, and brotherly love. Constantly it reverted to Italy and to the beloved Founder, about whom stories seemed inexhaustible. Only Brother Lawrence of Beauvais had known him personally, but Thomas in his boyhood had been much with those first companions, Leo, Giles, Rufino, Bernard, several of whom were still living in or near Assisi. John the neophyte came to wish intensely that he too might know these delightful men, and the nearer he grew in spirit to the charm and bonhomie that marked the Poverello, the

more he wished it. To be in Bernard's presence! To listen to Brother Giles! Almost it would be like knowing Francis himself.

Did he now and then, in all the joyousness of his new brothers, detect a note of sadness, of reserve? Concerning Leo, Giles, Bernard, it seemed as if all of them, especially Brother Thomas, were almost on the defensive. And how about Francis himself? There were times when a sense reached John of shadows in the life of the master. The image of the Little Poor Man of Assisi was that not only of a great lover, but of a great sufferer.

John was under holy obedience; small chance there seemed of his ever seeing Italy. Yet stranger things had happened, and meantime his life grew richer every day. The tiny dirty house at Exeter was, like all Franciscan houses, a real international centre. Constantly strange friars came and went, *adveni et pellegrini*, strangers and pilgrims, as they loved to call themselves. John found that his impulse to renounce the world had led him, not to a solitude but to a society. And what a society! Developing a life all its own, possessing its urgent questions, its struggles and incertitudes; a new civilization, penetrating the old dry social structure with strange and disturbing forces. Francis the Innovator! It was the name by which certain of the more thoughtful brothers best loved to hail him, and the significance impressed John more and more.

One day a visiting brother from Italy showed him some pencil drawings of rare and delicate beauty.

They adorned a manuscript of the Franciscan Rule. One represented Saint Francis preaching to the birds.

"They are the work of a compatriot of yours, Brother William of England," said Brother Marco the guest, as John, who had always a fervent love of the arts, turned the pages, fascinated. "The artist died a few years ago. He was a man severe in his deeds but very serene in appearance. He has been buried in the great church which has received Francis' body, and I hear that miracles are wrought at his tomb."

John was brooding on another picture. "I fail to understand it," he murmured, raising troubled eyes to Brother Marco. "This strange figure — it is a seraph? It is winged, yet crucified: crucified upon a tree of the wood. It stands on a rock. Who is this who lies on one side upon the ground? What are these red wounds, in hands and feet and side? What am I shown?"

"Surely you know the story of our Father Francis at la Verna," said Brother Marco, hushed and reverent. "Surely you have heard, or read —"

But at that point came by Brother Lawrence, and quietly put his hand over the manuscript. "This is not yet for you, my son," said he.

"Father!" cried John, lifting a countenance searched and a little wan: "I perceive that there is much you have not yet told me concerning this Way on which I have entered. Is it full of mysteries? Is it beset with thorns? The sun has shone on it so lovely and so clear. It has been radiant with light and joy. But as I look forward, it is mazed — it is dark."

The young man was conscious, as it were, of the strange pang of an approaching initiation.

"The sun is an abyss of consuming fire." Brother Lawrence spoke with a tone in his voice which John had never heard before. "As for thorns, they shall tangle your feet and they shall be woven for your crown. The time has not yet come to speak to you of these things, for the seraph with whom your spirit holds sweet converse is not yet the Crucified."

IV

HINTS OF SHADOW

"I WOULD not flee the anguished world. Ah no, I would embrace it." So had John spoken to his uncle. His wish was granted. The sorrows of the little city pressed upon him as he moved, humble and unshod, among its poor, craving their bounty. But greater than the pain was his joy in love released, and the more he did violence to his natural recoil from ugliness and disease the keener that joy grew.

Yet, as weeks went on, he perceived that the Order he had entered offered no sequestered home of peace, but a life in the open. In vain Brother Lawrence tried his best to give his novice an hour of paradisaical rapture in a haven where problems cease to annoy. A life of fellowship can never be such a haven; and the fellowship of the sons of Francis, who were men not withdrawn from the world but living in it normally, was subject to all the jars which always beset people trying to attain corporate harmony — especially if their methods run athwart the accredited social system.

From the time when John saw that strange picture of the crucified seraph, he became sensitive to cross currents among his beloved brethren. He had thought to find them living at unison in the spontaneity of love; and he had to fight his resentment against the organization which, while it ensured and preserved the ideal, menaced it also.

There were so many brothers! Learned men, men of property, men of repute, were flocking into the religion till it seemed bound almost to comprise the Christendom it would transform. And where were all these brothers to live, if you please? All very well for one man, or two, to wander about the world with no fixed habitation. But thousands? No, there must be settled abodes. And in view of the rapid growth foreseen, what sense was there in making these houses too small? Plan them capacious. Such was the advice of the Bishop of Lincoln, great friend to the Order. But what would Francis say?

Oh these questions of property! Insistent, recurrent! To abandon personal claims was not the end but the beginning, it seemed, of trouble. John's own feeling was for the absolute poverty of the mendicant. To forego the subtle pride of the donor, to have naught to give, all to accept — was not this the right attitude for Christlike men?

But would begging be unpleasant to everyone? Possibilities of a vast burden of laziness imposed on the community in the name of sanctity rose before John's horrified imagination. Might not manual work be

wiser? John wavered, but was at times inclined to agree with a certain Brother Aymon, who was said to prefer that the brothers own their gardens and live on the produce of these. At the very beginning, so said someone, the brothers had been allowed to beg for lepers only, not for themselves, but this idea had become obsolete almost at once.

Very perplexing, these points, and debated passionately, sometimes with acrimony, in the little circle.

In another cognate matter it was even harder to follow literally the will of the Founder. How about churches? The brothers had as yet no churches of their own, cherishing permission to carry about little portable altars. Francis had insisted that their chapels as well as their homes should be meanly built, of twigs and refuse. But great cathedrals were a-building just then all over Europe, and many drawn to the family of the saint were exactly the kind of men to care intensely for the beautiful praise of God in stone, and to feel tingling within them the desire to create loveliness. The stricter brothers frowned. "Superfluities will grow in the Order as unnoticed as hairs in the beard," was a current saying. At Gloucester, under the first minister to England, Agnellus, a brother who had cunningly painted a pulpit had been rebuked and deprived of his hood. The present minister, Albert of Pisa, had destroyed a lovely stone cloister at Southampton, although the townsmen had protested. Quite rightly, John supposed. He had always felt distaste for luxury unshared. And yet

churches were for everyone. So many people wanted to hear the friars preach! Parish churches were far from hospitable. Ought they not to be in a position to show hospitality of their own?

If building were a sin, the chief offender was that Brother Elias whose name was so often signal for distressed silence. Brother Elias was Minister General, Head of the entire Order. Francis himself had designated him in the sad weeks when he lay dying. Or was this wrong? Had the dear Father indicated Bernard, the first companion, and had Elias and his friends stolen the blessing? Confused discussion raged, painful to John. In any case, this Elias seemed a curious person for the head of the religion. Shocked reports drifted to Exeter of his pomp, his residence at Assisi in the magnificent apartments prepared for Pope Gregory.

"What would you have?" said Brother Gilbert, shrugging his shoulders. "Plebeian tastes! Remember the mattress maker."

"I should call such tastes rather aristocratic," said Richard.

Brother Lawrence agreed with Gilbert. "Every man," he suggested, "craves abundance in proportion as he has been denied."

Elias had his advocates. They pleaded the great love he bore to Francis. Was he not directing his best energies to the completion of that magnificent church on the Hill of Hell, — now Hill of Paradise, — built to receive the body of the saint?

Oh, that church! Would not Francis lie ill at ease

in such a tomb? Gossip was rife. When the church had been begun, Brother Leo, Francis' dear Pecorello, had shown the wrath of the lamb, had shattered the marble vase placed to receive offerings. And Elias had beaten with rods that beloved little sheep of Francis — and had gone on building. Brother Thomas clapped his hands and broke into saturnine laughter when this story was rehearsed.

Near ten years ago this had happened, and still the building went on. Word came of detail after detail, rich ornaments, carving, frescoes, projected bells. Nay, there were now two churches, — the scandal of it! — one above the other; and in the upper church, a letter said, pictures were growing all over the walls, and one Giunta Pisano had painted Elias himself, large as life, kneeling at the foot of the Cross.

This last item certainly disgusted John. But so far as pictures went, he was conscious of keen desire to see them. He liked pictures. It had been his special joy to cover walls with frescoes in his own little chapel at the castle of Sanfort.

Elias was far away, and assuredly the wee place at Exeter did not in any wise disappoint the appetite for squalor. John listened more or less dreamily to the excited talk that went on, and pushed difficulties impatiently aside — they should not bite into his soul! What did they amount to, he asked himself, in comparison with the tremendous, indubitable fact that a new type of personality and behavior was emerging in the world under the influence of the Poverello?

Yet, before long, certain problems stung him. He was regularly questing now. That meant that he was under the special orders of Brother Thomas. It was forbidden to accept as alms more than could be consumed in the day, and Francis had demanded that money never be received. "We handle no coins," Brother Lawrence had said to John, sharply and definitely.

But it came to pass one day that John found Brother Thomas sorting coins with a little stick!

"I am not touching the accursed stuff," said Thomas austerely.

"You are touching it with your mind," returned the novice — it is to be feared in no wholly humble spirit.

Brother Thomas turned on him with defiant exasperation. "And if I lived as most of you do, in a fool's paradise, how would Brother Richard fare when he comes back from fasting all day in the wood, his eyes aflame, his lips dead white, and found no supper?"

"Much he would care!" was John's retort.

"True. But Brother Gilbert would care. He would tell me that under such circumstances the flame would not burn long in the lamp of flesh."

"Shall we not believe that God would provide the supper?" hesitated John.

Thomas spread open his expressive Italian hands. "When the brothers put me in charge of these matters, I suspect the expectation was that God would act through me."

"If the food is scant, we have never blamed you,

Brother." John, who was beginning to love his irascible comrade, spoke gently, and his gentleness won quick response.

"How about blaming myself? How about the trust reposed in me?" sighed Brother Thomas; and drew John's eyes into his own. "Look you! When one is alone, Lady Poverty is a light-hearted comrade. One finds no shelter — sweet the bed she spreads beneath the stars. One finds no food — there is a manna of the soul on which only the hungry may feed. *Cantabit vacuus viator!* I have noticed that these words of the pagan poet are dear to you. I too have sung them; but that song is not for a chorus. We are here in brotherhood, and without care and foresight no brotherhood can live."

"'Behold the birds of the air. They sow not neither do they reap nor gather into barns,'" John mused.

"We are not birds, we are men," returned Thomas sombrely. He spoke with bitterness and fire, and silence fell. John for an instant felt the menacing chill of doubt invade his joy. Was poverty then a dream? Was Francis wrong from the beginning? Nay, was Christ Himself — He caught his breath, and looked at Thomas, piteous and scared.

"Lord forgive me if I have disturbed the innocent mind," sighed the other to himself; then, turning to John: —

"Do not trouble. There is One Who guides. That Francis did verily show us the Way of Perfection, I firmly believe. Does he not work miracles? Is it not

a miracle if I, who loved money once," — he beat his breast, — "now loathe it? For love of the brethren it seems I must have dealings with it still. That is, I suppose, my penance, imposed on me by our dear Father, who always had a sense of humor — Alas, alas!" He had forgotten John again. "At night, when I should be at my prayers, I count and calculate. And —" his voice sank; he gripped John's arm, and whispered: "I am haunted. Not by a devil — worse! By that Judas who carried the bag."

John's keen interest in the problem Thomas unfolded to him was merged for the moment in human sympathy and longing to help this soul in distress.

"Listen, dear brother," he cried. "It is for us you suffer. You are tortured that we may go free. It is my turn now to bid you not to be troubled. Your desire is pure. I do not believe there is one of us whose love for Lady Poverty is deeper than your own."

Thomas, though soothed a little, shook his head. "Desire is not enough," he said, "nor will love alone suffice to lead us out of this tangle. Travail of thought lies before us of the religion, and long anguish in seeking the true Way. *'Nudus nudam crucem ferar!* Naked may I bear the naked cross'!" With abrupt gesture he swept the little pile of coins to the floor, where they lay in confusion. "I must go pray," he said. "Rejoice in the bird life, dear novice, while you may."

John looked after him wistfully. "I too must pray," thought he, "and I shall pray that not Judas but Another guard the sleep to-night of Brother Thomas." He

glanced with hesitant distaste at the pitiful little pile on the floor, then left it where it had fallen. The pang, while Thomas had been speaking, had been sharp; but it passed swiftly, though it left a sting behind, to burn in future years. Again, the reality of the faith that held him and his friends was too palpable, the contrast between this life and his former life too clear, for him to dismiss devotion to poverty as an illusion.

For despite all surface agitations, the tides of John's life ran joyous, cleansed and strong. They flashed radiance like the seas of his own Cornwall under the open azure, when shadows of clouds drifting over the waters served only to awaken more exquisite iridescence. Yet was it joy he knew? Not rather pain? Impassioned longing for union with the One Beauty threw into insignificance escape from lesser chains. Sharp, swift, the pang of ultimate need would stab him for a fleeting instant.

Talk which John was not permitted to share went on. One day he overheard a few strangely troubling words which passed between Brother Thomas and a stranger from Italy. "*Nudus nudam crucem!*" cried Thomas once more, and the stranger, in his own speech, was saying with eyes aglow something which sounded like "nichilitade." John did not understand.

But his brothers, watching tenderly, saw dawning in the face of their young comrade day by day the look that only those born from Above may wear.

Meanwhile, unrest was increasing. More and more heated grew the talk about Brother Elias. Elias carried

things with a high hand, and in ways which roused in English and Scottish brothers more intimate resentment than any building of a church in Italy. For he was appointing visitors from the Continent, to inspect all the convents, to report on them, even — it was said — to collect monies. Scotland, to Brother Thomas' sardonic satisfaction, had flatly refused to receive these visitors. England did not go so far; but angrily the English houses discussed this invasion of their liberties. A couple of friars from the great Oxford House were talking one day.

"Visitors! To a house where Brother Adam Marsh is living! I believe Elias would inspect Francis himself!"

"How does Brother Adam bear him in this invasion?" asked Brother Gilbert.

"Like a Christian. He is not a man to preach humility and resent humiliations."

Absent-minded Brother Lawrence had let the thread of the conversation go. Now he spoke with troubled earnestness. "When all is said," he mused, "I would stake my life on this — that Elias loved Francis well."

"Call you that love which seeks to dominate?" pondered Gilbert. "Not so. True love seeks neither to control nor to possess."

Lawrence had no chance to reply, for the hard voice of Brother Thomas cut into Gilbert's brooding tones. "Loved him? He sent him to his death!" cried Thomas, his face on fire. "Who drove the wounds in Francis' limbs and side? Who, but Elias?"

An appalled silence fell. John, startled by the words, more by his brothers' looks, left the room abruptly. Wounds? Francis?

Cherished in his heart was the image of that dear Leader, radiant with courtesy and joy. Yet of late he had been haunted by the strange picture by Brother William, the picture of one beholding, in vision, a seraph crucified.

"My son," said Lawrence to him gravely the next morning, "I am sending you back to Oxford with these brothers. You are to continue your novitiate under Brother Adam Marsh."

"Greet for me Master Roger Bacon," said Gilbert. "Ah, there is a man who should belong to us — though some would not agree with me. We shall miss you at Exeter," he added.

V

OXFORD DAYS

Eighty brothers after four! The first effect, rather curiously, was of change to a greater quietness. At Exeter was the stir and excitement which accompanies beginnings. At Oxford the Franciscan life had found itself, and all was dignity and ordered calm. The day was past when Oxford brothers had to take the discipline for giggling boisterously in choir.

Some puzzles which had agitated the Exeter group were largely in the background at Oxford. Problems of ownership were met by the convenient appointment of trustees, to whom all monies destined for the friars must be consigned. Eight years before, Gregory IX had approved this scheme in a famous bull, *Quo Elongati;* it certainly had the advantage of avoiding direct corporate ownership, while it set the brothers as free as human nature can possibly be from material concerns. Men of substance were delighting to show generosity to the friars. It would have seemed strange to Lord John of Sanfort to receive lands from Robert the mercer or Richard the miller, but John the friar

took the matter quite simply. The Oxford house was plain enough — low walls, a tiny infirmary, no guest-room; but it was fairly commodious. Life was serene at Oxford.

It was also interesting, in ways of which John had never dreamed. Each house in the Religion had, as he was to learn, a special emphasis. London was marked by fervor in the divine office, York by zeal for poverty, Salisbury by mutual love. At Oxford the leading passion was for the life of the mind; the place was rivaled only by Paris as an intellectual centre. Worldly cares and needs ignored, personal claims indifferently reduced to the rigid minimum, the brothers absorbed themselves in eager study. Brother Richard had been right in noting the influx of learned men into the Order. They had begun to come even in the days of the Saint, but of late had increased amazingly. It was Agnellus, founder of the Religion in England, a man after Francis' own heart, who had first, after a temporary dispersion of the students in the University of Paris, put up a building suitable for studies. Later he doubted his own wisdom, but he could not undo his deed. Agnellus was buried now, in the Oxford church, but already his school had a great tradition. Grossteste, the distinguished Bishop of Lincoln, had lectured there; his friend, Brother Adam Marsh, under whose care John now passed, was the present lecturer. Who could help honoring Brother Adam? He was the chief ornament of the English Order. His pure simplicity, his vast erudition, his broad and tempered wisdom, his

human tenderness, were a revelation to John of what a man might be. And when Brother Adam, smiling kindly on the young novice, attached him closely to his person as a sort of secretary, John rejoiced in his luck.

He was not much of a student, but the atmosphere of study was delightful to him, and he reveled in this Oxford house, which seemed a centre for all that was most daring, ardent, new, in the life of the mind. He felt lifted into the bracing air of regions high above earth's languors or desires. But was this the air of the authentic heavens? Not certainly of the heaven of Saint Francis. Presently the relation of this intellectual energy to the spirit of the saint was perplexing John nearly as much as questions concerning property had vexed him at Exeter. Francis had sought with anxious passion to keep his brothers simple and unlearned; he had even protested vehemently against ownership of a breviary. Had he been right? Or was the right with Master Roger Bacon, that stimulating man whom John met soon after entering the Oxford chapter, who with equal vehemence pleaded for lecture halls, laboratories, all that would facilitate learning?

An extraordinary person, this Master Roger, still young, though six or seven years older than John. Not a friar yet, though he was said seriously to consider profession. Long, lean, dry, and charged with vitality. To hear him talk was an experience: ideas coruscated when he opened his lips. So new were they that no one understood them enough to condemn; he was

surely as much of an innovator as Francis; though on such different lines! John learned that he was out of sympathy with the University of Paris, where fashion set wholly to the study of civil law. Bacon had scant liking for this fashion. "For the last thirty years," John overheard him saying emphatically to Adam Marsh, "the abuse of civil law has been undermining not only the study of philosophy but all the kingdoms of Christendom." What did Bacon himself care for most? John was fascinated to find out.

He got a hint from the special emphasis in the Oxford school on the study of mathematics as a basis for the physical sciences, and on language study. It was Bishop Grossteste who had connected Bacon with the friars, and had procured for him the use of their very inadequate classrooms. Grossteste and Brother Adam were enthusiastic for the new ways. Bacon was gathering around him a group of lads to help in certain experiments, which he was financing out of his own private means, for he was a man well to do. His eager interest roamed over all conceivable fields.

He took a fancy to John, and one day spoke to him of his great ambition — that *opus majus* which he planned some day to write. It should be a work to prove the Catholic faith the supreme agency for the enlightenment and ennoblement of mankind. And Bacon believed that, for the faith to accomplish this, a complete renovation and reorganization of man's intellectual forces was needed. John listened, stirred by high excitement. But what had this renovation of

intellectual forces to do with Saint Francis' ideals of love and surrender?

Timidly he put the question one afternoon, when the two young men were walking under a sky of early summer, by the banks of the shining little Oxford river. Master Roger peered at him with frowning brows, attentive eyes, and proceeded to talk of history, of language study, of theology, of his beloved sciences, in an entirely new way. He showed conclusively, at least for the moment, the vital connection which all these had with the ideals and the practical work of the friars.

Language study, for instance. John laughed ruefully over the tale of the brothers originally sent to Germany, who, knowing one German word only, cheerfully answered "Ja, Ja," when asked if they were heretics — and were promptly hounded out of the land. German, to be sure, was not taught at Oxford; but Grossteste knew Greek, read it for pleasure, and Bacon and he stressed both that and Hebrew. The Jews, said Bacon, might long ago have been converted if men could have talked to them in their own tongue. But the brutal illiteracy of the German brothers had prevented the conversion of all the heathen who dwelt beyond their land.

As for scientific studies — how could you love the earth, as Francis did, without wanting to learn about it? "The end of all true philosophy," said Bacon, with kindled face, "is to arrive at the knowledge of the Creator through knowledge of the external world." There were practical points too. Such studies, for

instance, were bound to transform the practice of medicine, and if there was one vocation to which the sons of Francis were called, it was the care of the sick. Yes, Bacon knew Brother Gilbert well — a sound man. In this connection he threw out a curious remark: that he thought the maintenance of the sick and the aged poor should be a charge on the State.

Theology — queen of sciences and arts! Theology certainly the friars should know, for the whole world was clamoring for their preaching. The secular clergy, Bacon said, were of unbelievable ignorance, and if the friars were to meet the need, they must have more grounding in sound doctrine. Aristotle must be studied in a new way if at all. Alexander of Hales at Paris had been saying this for a long time — not that Bacon cared much for Alexander, one Pierre de Maricourt called " the Master of Experiments " meaning more to him. But the friars needed also a more human technique for effective preaching; this Bacon said they were acquiring; and John had noticed that his brothers' sermons were full of anecdotes and jokes.

What lay behind these new studies, which at every point substituted interest in the living world for dialectical subtleties? Surely Francis' own instinct to press lovingly home to reality! No wonder that students in shoals from Ireland, Aquitaine, Spain, Portugal, Germany, were hastening to the Oxford schools. There were four impediments to wisdom, Bacon said: authority, habit, prejudice, and false conceit of knowledge. Were not these, thought John,

the very four whose yoke he had thrown off when he had begged from Brother Lawrence the right to wear for an hour the tattered habit of Francis?

Bold, liberal, impatient, Bacon was devout also. Stoic in morals, unworldly as Francis himself, his interior life centred in peculiar devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Why, in spite of the enthusiasm he aroused in John, did he yet seem to the novice a little out of the Franciscan picture? The question had to be settled. For one day, while these matters were seething in John's mind, Bacon urgently invited him to become one of that company of young men who worked with him. He even had a task picked out. In English libraries lay countless treasures unavailable to scholars because uncatalogued. Would John undertake to catalogue them?

Pacing once more by the banks of the river where Master Roger and he had talked, John debated with himself. Almost at once he knew what must be his answer. Bacon offered him rich delights; yet a deep instinct assured him that the pure life of the mind was not for him. His passion was for experience itself, not for preliminaries or commentaries. But as he strolled on his musings took wider sweep, for more than a personal question was involved here.

What was the root of the terror with which Francis had regarded learning? First, of course, the fact that its votary must make certain claims on things — on books, fixed abode, privacy. Now it was Francis' idea to live without claims.

Next: Did not that old enemy, the defense of the proprium, enter insidiously the heart devoted to study? Was greed for time any better than greed for money? John smiled. He recalled Bacon's annoyance yesterday when Master Adam had asked him to leave his work for a consultation of the friars — for that discussion about visitors was hot again. Bacon had impatiently refused. Well — John had run away himself, being terribly bored by this talk about visitors. But if a man made love's ultimate surrender, had he any more right to control his time than his wealth?

Finally, the scholar's life was in last analysis concerned with the things of earth, and the atmosphere in which he moved was not the pure air of spiritual mysticism which John had breathed with Brother Richard, Brother Lawrence, and Brother Thomas.

He did not think much of his own arguments, but his personal course was clear. Bacon sighed when the novice gently declined the tempting proposal, but he was evidently not surprised.

Yet if to learning John might not dedicate himself, then to what? Bacon's offer had stirred his mind to acute question. Within the Franciscan fold he had not yet found his special vocation. Whither had his great call summoned him? Surely not to mere negative renunciation. It had lured him forth from his natural life, where duties, such as they were, were predetermined, to a strange land, misty, pathless —

Restlessness was upon the novice. The exalted

joys of his life at Exeter yielded at Oxford to a confused depression. After brief study or attendance on lecture or instruction, he would be irresistibly urged to the hills or the lonely places, always with a sense — always doomed to disappointment — of something waiting him there. His hours of prayer were cherished, but not prolonged. At the first touch of mystic warmth within his breast, a curious necessity, whether of God or of the devil he could not tell, would drive him out again among his fellows. Nor were his struggles wholly inward. He fell, it must be frankly stated, now into physical indulgence, now into morbid self-reproach. His old fastidiousness of taste reasserted itself. He longed to find himself, as he sometimes did in dreams, on the back of his good horse. And he had loved his little castle. Never had Lady Poverty been dearer to him, but she led him on a darkling path, toward an unknown goal.

Christmas time came, a year since his novitiate began. When Pope Gregory in the preceding January had reaffirmed a year as the necessary period of novitiate, John had chafed at the delay. But now, he scarcely knew why, he did not seek to be professed. Nor did wise Adam Marsh propose it to him. For preoccupied as that great master was with myriad interests, he yet found time to note the condition of his novice — and without surprise; for well he knew these alternations of mood, this lapse of joy, this desperate sense of loss, to be usual signs of vocation. Time was necessary for the soul to climb that Ladder of Love which no two

men can take in the same tempo. Adam allowed several months to elapse. But the day came when he probably felt that John's spiritual health demanded that he be brought to a decision, and led more fully into the active life of the Order.

The novice was in the room when Brother Adam was dictating a letter to Bishop Grossteste. It was all about those tiresome visitors and a chapter meeting to be held on the matter next week. John was paying scant attention.

"Come to this chapter meeting, John," he suddenly heard Adam saying.

"Why?" queried John sullenly: "The matter does not interest me in the least."

"Everything that interests your brothers should interest you." Adam spoke a little sharply.

John roused himself. "What harm do the visitors do us? They cannot touch our souls. True liberty, that *libertà francescana* which we cherish, cannot be affected by coercion in matters external."

Now Brother Adam smiled at him. "You are right and wrong," he answered. "And in any case you should not hold aloof from what concerns the community. You have yet to learn that love is not sentiment but discipline, and that to achieve fellowship is a difficult task. It is a task you must share in due time, and a good time to begin is now, when our English liberties are at stake. I do not care for coercion myself," he added, smiling still. "It would not be very consistent with my defense of liberty if I ordered you to come to

this chapter meeting. So I will only tell you my strong wish to see you there."

"Of course I shall come, Father." John was all sunshine again, his most winning self, which was very winning indeed.

"You will see old friends from Exeter," Brother Adam told him, "Brother Lawrence and Brother Thomas. And you will see and perhaps hear Brother Aymon, who has indeed already arrived. His presence with us is an honor."

John looked at Adam a little audaciously, a hint of the seigneur in his eyes; "I cannot abide Brother Aymon," said he.

Brother Adam was horrified. "John! What do you say? He is one of our holiest, our most learned."

"I know that. I know he was sent to the East to try to reconcile the Eastern Church and our own, that he has distinguished himself at Paris; I know that he is revising the breviary; and I am glad his habit is so tattered. But I wish it were not also so filthy. And I think he is the coldest and most unsympathetic man I ever saw. He is reputed eloquent and alluring, but I can't tell why. He terrifies me — which is foolish, I admit, for it is evident that he never sees me, even when I am exactly in front of him."

Adam threw back his head, and laughed and laughed. "John, you speak like a very naughty little lad," said he. "And moreover, you do not understand what you are talking about. There are depths of tenderness in Aymon," he went on more gravely. "He is a man of

God. You should have known him as I did in his delicate youth, when he wrapped himself against the cold in softest clothing. There is a hair shirt beneath the habit now. This bids fair to be a cruel time for Brother Aymon. The discussion of our liberties will lead us far away from England. Brother Elias is deemed the source of all our troubles; and Brother Elias is a dear friend of Aymon's, close, if I mistake not, to his inmost heart. Pray for Brother Aymon, John — sore straits may wait for him.

"But as for his ignoring you," added Adam more lightly, "that is the best thing which could happen to you, as is proved by the sharpness of the sting it is inflicting. They paid quite too much attention to you at Exeter. Come, come — it is a great means of grace to be ignored."

VI

THE FRIAR PROFESSED

The English chapter in full session was a striking sight — hundreds of men whose fine distinction of face and bearing was in strange contrast with their mean attire. As always in groups of the Brothers Minor, there was an international infusion in the gathering. Not only Brother Thomas, saturnine as ever, was present, but several other Italians — stocky these of figure, their race betrayed by their dark, deep-set eyes and olive complexions. Three or four Dutchmen, high cheek-boned, able looking; Brother Peter, a Spaniard; and a half dozen Frenchmen, including Lawrence of Beauvais, who smiled lovingly at John as he caught sight of him across the hall.

But the English note naturally predominated, and John was proud of his countrymen. Wholesome looking men they were, fair mostly, well set up. Their social provenance was mixed; one could distinguish the Norman strain from the Saxon. The professional quality was in evidence, as was natural in a meeting held at Oxford, where so many were attached to the

schools. The occasion of the meeting was grave, but the Englishmen, though the persons chiefly concerned, gave less sign of excitement than some of the others.

Eyes turned often to Aymon of Feversham, who sat low on the floor in a conspicuous part of the room. He was an aging man, short, dark, with half-fretful air and sensitive mouth, insignificant enough at first glance, but evidently, from the deference accorded him, a pivot of importance and interest. The subject before the chapter was the visitors dispatched from Italy, and Aymon listened attentively, with an inscrutable expression, to loud complaints concerning their insolence and the unendurable despotism of the man who had dispatched them. Presently he rose to speak; and as John had been led to expect, he made a plea in favor of Elias. He spoke with terse, incisive force, with some constraint, John thought — certainly with few traces of the eloquence with which he was credited, and he made out a strong case.

Francis, said Brother Aymon, had never dreamed how wide the appeal of his new chivalry would be. Organization had been alien and distasteful to him. His spirit had blown into the dry enclosures of his age, fresh and sweet as a spring wind; can you systematize the wind? But it was fortunate that a man of administrative gifts had followed him. None else could have done so great a work as Brother Elias in bringing order out of chaos. Brother Aymon presented a vivid picture of the wild, unregulated movements, insane,

fanatical, prevalent in Italy a few years ago; of a situation before which the Curia was helpless. John, who had grown up in an aristocratic atmosphere immune to disturbing ideas, listened amazed. No wonder that the Holy Father had given to Elias his warm confidence! In a continuous chapter for a year after he had been elected Minister-General, he had wrestled with all difficulties, had shown himself a true statesman. Moreover, many present could testify how marvelously he had quickened missionary zeal, with what ardor he had fostered learning — a point, this last, which should be appreciated at Oxford.

Aymon's tone had become intensely earnest. To himself as well as to the chapter, he was pleading. John was inclined to be convinced. What were autocratic ways, what minor deviations from the Rule, in comparison with such great and essential services? The young Lord of Sanfort, in whose veins ran the blood of leaders, recognized what travail was necessary to crystallize an emotional ideal into a workable system.

But one of the Frenchmen was on his feet, hardly waiting for Aymon to end. About Elias' patronage of learning — how was it that all the Paris doctors were against him?

"And the missionary zeal?" cried another brother. Had Brother Elias cared as much for converting heathen as for getting inconvenient enthusiasts out of the way? Ardor in foreign lands is all very well, and it may win the bliss of martyrdom. Ardor nearer home is sometimes inconvenient.

And now the meeting lost its decorum. A chorus of voices rose, once more denouncing the visitations. Brother Arnulf, the Pope's confessor, had said that no more subtle snare for souls had ever been conceived than that system of spying control. For, said Arnulf, every brother was telling tales on every other, and the visitor held any brother excommunicate who concealed knowledge from him; and terrible confusion ensued. Scotland had done well, Brother Thomas called out, in refusing to accept these outsiders, insisting on managing its own affairs.

"Yet," ventured a gentle-faced English brother, "ought we perhaps to be patient? Is it possible that this is a discipline ordained of God?"

At this, Lawrence of Beauvais rose heavily to his feet and carried the discussion back into a larger air. The grievance was not only theirs in England. Elias flouted the whole ideal of Francis — said that he had never himself agreed to follow the Rule!

"Brother Bernard has been forced to flee to the forest!" called a voice from the back of the room. And all looked aghast.

At this point Brother Thomas, standing at one side, gaunt and sad, spoke in resonant tones. "Where is Cæsar of Spires?" cried he.

Silence fell — a hush that could be felt. Brother Aymon hid his face in his hands. Brother Thomas went on:—

"Brother Cæsar! He who helped the Father to draw up the Rule. Where is he to-day? In prison!"

Through the following clamor now and then a defending word could be heard. Elias of the lax party? But he had decreed that the brothers wash their own clothes! And he had multiplied the obligatory fasts! At this a derisive laugh rose from the Italian brothers, and one sprang to his feet. "Zeal for poverty — or for domination?" cried he. "How think you I saw the Bombarone? Riding daintily on a dainty palfrey. His delicate health, his delicate stomach, forsooth! In his kitchen his cook, who had been the cook of a cardinal, was preparing for him a peacock stuffed with chestnuts!"

Groans arose. But several voices were heard, saying, "These things do not concern the English chapter; but the visitors we cannot endure."

Brother Lawrence beckoned for silence. When quiet fell once more, he demanded with dignity that a delegation be sent to Rome, to complain of the visitors.

All looked to Brother Adam Marsh. He had sat, grave and calm, through the hot talk.

"We can do no otherwise," his words dropped clear. "I have feared this since years ago I withstood Elias at Rome. It is not for us to judge our brothers, but it is for us to preserve the vision of Francis. Nor can we Englishmen tolerate an invasion of our liberties. Whom need we as a leader? An organizer? Such the world can furnish. One who fosters learning? Learning I like, but," he smiled ruefully, "the Seraphic Father did not. No, we need one like him, who shall count the world well lost for love." Master Adam

drew a deep breath and raised his hand. "I bring a message," he said, slow and serious, "from our friend the Bishop of Lincoln. That which Brother Lawrence has proposed had risen in his heart also. He counsels, and he tells me the counsel is born of prayer, that a delegation of protest be commissioned to present our cause to the Holy Father."

A sigh of relief went round the room. Only Brother Aymon sat still, his head drooped deeper in his hands. Brother Adam moved across, stood by him, put his hand on Aymon's shoulder.

"Brother," said he, "will you head this delegation?"

The pause seemed long, while still the constraining hand pressed the shoulder. At last Aymon lifted his head, and all saw that he had been weeping.

"Not this — not this!" he moaned. "Brothers, lay not this burden on me! He has been my own familiar friend."

"Will you put your love for this man above your love for the Order?" asked Adam gently.

Brother Aymon rose, and faced the group. He made the sign of the cross on his breast. "I will present your cause," said he, in a choked voice, of which no syllable was lost. "I know it just. Things that have been unsaid, I know. Therefore I will if need be seek the disgrace of my friend. And not only for the sake of the Order, but for his own sake will I do this. Elias Peccator! So he signs himself always. Elias Peccator! But Aymon, Aymon Peccator! Brothers, pray for us."

"How sad Brother Thomas looks! I am so sad myself, it will help me to cheer him up," thought John, as the meeting dispersed. He put himself, laughing a little, in the path of the older man.

The familiar, reluctant smile lightened in Thomas' eyes. "How fares our novice?" he asked.

"The better for seeing you," returned John lovingly. "But," and as in earlier days something about Brother Thomas drew out his confidence, "but in the main not so well as at Exeter."

Thomas looked inquiry.

"This Order — I thought it a home of peace. But it is a house of contention. And my own heart is no better."

Thomas shook his grave head. The old look, burning yet remote, came into his face. "Not in an Order will you find your rest," said he, "nor in your heart, till that heart has learned the Secret of Naughting. I knew when first I saw you that you must travel far."

"The Secret of Naughting?" Strange words! They pursued the novice till, when the evening was far spent, he found himself kneeling beside the leaden tomb of Agnellus of Pisa. The Secret of Naughting! Was it to this that his desire had set when he threw away all that the world held precious? And lately again, when he had seen so clearly that the lure of learning was not for him? Must confidence in his own chosen group go next? Through that chapter meeting he had realized that his heart was knit, for good or ill, into miraculous unity with the troubled heart of his Order.

It was indeed an awesome road, ever more cold, more dark, on which his feet had started. He surrendered himself to wordless supplication, not for himself alone, seeking to lie passive to the invasions of love.

Cold? Dark? What rose within that dark, uplifted high? "*Nudus nudam crucem ferar,*" cried John, not knowing what he cried. And as he cried, the dark lifted. John saw with spiritual sight. Once or twice before this had happened to him, but never so clearly. Up mighty slopes, there pressed a pilgrim throng, gray-clad. Their eyes were on their leader, a small dark man bearing a flaming cross. It was the glow from that naked cross which caused the fog to fade. Those who followed bore crosses also, but the glow from them was faint; and many carried their crosses not buoyantly erect as did the leader, but heavily, on their stooped shoulders, and the upward way was rough. There were also those who bore no crosses in that throng; and presently one of these turned from the track the leader had ascended, choosing a smooth and level way. And many followed him, men often of honorable countenance; and some bore crosses even — but never a cross that gleamed.

It seemed to John that he knew some among these pilgrims. The dark face of Brother Thomas flashed on him for an instant; was it not his own figure that moved beside? Who was this other, closer still? But at this point the vision blurred. The figure that might have been his own drew near to the divided tracks. The picture changed and he saw one form

alone, the form of the leader. And that leader bore his flaming cross no longer, for it rose above him, and stooped toward him, wing-encircled. And the man was on his knees —

"My son," the voice of Adam Marsh said softly, "my son!" with somewhat louder note — and John woke from his daze. He was still kneeling by the leaden tomb. His hands, to his surprise, were uplifted, palms open, toward a great wooden crucifix which hung above. He experienced a strange mixture of anguish and well-being; his palms tingled faintly, a little pain shot through his side. Then he was himself again, Adam's kind hand on his shoulder.

"My son," said Adam, "you are to accompany Brother Aymon and the delegation to Italy. By holy obedience."

"Yes, Father," stammered John, crossing his hands on his breast in token of submission. "But you said to me once," he added a little ruefully, "that I was useful to you here."

"Too useful," sighed Brother Adam, half to himself. But to John he said: "Brother Chad will take your place as my scribe."

John, now on his feet, looked amazed. For Brother Chad was a clodhopper lad, at whom the brothers laughed more or less impatiently. He had an impediment in his speech, he would not and could not study, he had no luck in begging alms. It was a constant problem to know what to do with him. The soul of Brother Chad was said to be very pure. John had

dared to think himself of some importance to the beloved Brother Adam. It was pain to love and pride to be thus lightly dismissed, supplanted by Brother Chad! And to travel with Aymon! The emotion John had witnessed in this brother had wrung his heart, but had if anything increased the distaste with which he contemplated close fellowship.

Had he not longed for Italy? Yes; but now that the way was open, it was perversely to Oxford that his heart was cleaving.

Brother Adam admonished the drooping novice with his finger. "It is not for you to question," said he. "Kneel for me at the Little Portion. Remember me at the Carceri, the hermitage that Francis loved. I offer you a joy coveted by all sons of our little Father. You shall tread in his very footsteps."

"I would rather tread in yours," John murmured. But Brother Adam shook his finger again.

"Brother Chad has a willing heart," said he. "He shall be grieved no longer by fear lest we have no use for him."

He paused a moment, bent his loving gaze upon the novice.

"Before you go, my son John, I would fain that you be professed. Your novitiate has been prolonged beyond our wont."

John shook off his surface regret. A great moment was upon him.

"I am ready," he said gravely. "And I have somewhat to tell you, Father. As I take my vows, I shall

pledge me not only to poverty and Christ, but to the loyal service of this dear Order."

Adam smiled, well pleased. "Prepare your confession," said he, "for at sunrise you shall be received."

For the rest of the night John's blood was singing. He kept blessed vigil before the tomb. Once more, as in Cornwall, his spirit was in the winter forest; once more he was renewed, as by far faint music that hailed the Word Incarnate. And once again, a freshening wind, afar, above, blew clear his soul's heaven. Or was it more true to say that release rose from depths of being? Lady Poverty! He had never yet met her face to face. She waited for him, in an abyss which he had not sounded. He suspected that his ordinary, normal awareness was part only of a larger self, above, around, beneath his conscious being.

The old stories of chivalry, which he had loved well as a young seigneur, ran through the mind of the kneeling neophyte as he kept vigil before his accolade. Had not Francis liked to call his brothers Knights of the Table Round? The Order he entered was not a garden, but a battlefield. Very well! To be a Lesser Brother was not, it seemed, to win surcease from strife and pain. Rather it was initiation to new conflict. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," were the words mystically given to him that night — words which ever after recalled the hour of his reception.

The tormenting doubts of his stormy novitiate were blessedly in abeyance. Brother Adam, watching as John pronounced his vows at sunrise, saw the dawn of

a new manhood in his face. The vision of the cross-bearers had vanished, but the faint tingling in his palms remained.

> (O Wind of God, blow in the dead air of the prison cell! Blow in the weary heart of the old friar! Purify, renew!)

PART TWO

ON JOURNEY

I

HORIZONS WIDEN

His solemn hour past, John was a boy again. Italy! Why had he not leaped to the idea? How lucky that he had picked up a bit of the language from Brother Thomas! French was of course native to him, though his tongue had a twist which might make men smile at Paris. Latin too he was beginning to stammer, for his uncle the monk had grounded him in it — alas, as John now realized, entertaining false hopes for his future. But Uncle Philip's work came in well now, for John did not wish to be one of the lay brothers not at home in the Offices, tenderly though Francis had provided for such. On the whole, he trusted that language would not be much of a barrier between himself and his fellows. To get rid of barriers — that was the point of living. Italy, Italy!

The travel of the friars required no preliminaries. Off they were, five of them, with a sense of joyous adventure which he who travels on the security of a full purse may never know. *Adveni et pellegrini! Cantabit vacuus viator!* The old watchwords gave the

rhythm to John's march. Habited like the poorest, he and his brothers were greeted everywhere with an informal welcome that he found most grateful. He did not often beg; it was still the pleasant custom of the friars to earn their bread when possible as they went along. The young noble who had turned with distaste from many occupations of his own caste found this a rare passport to fellowship. Nothing could have been a more novel adventure than to pull ropes with a sailor on the boat to France; he had a delicious sense of reality as he kept vigil by a charcoal kiln to relieve the tired man in charge, or convulsed his comrades with laughter by his efforts to balance on his head the heavy waterpot which he had seized from an old woman.

Dinner was not always connected with these exploits. The brothers worked for love, not pay, and many a time the pay was not forthcoming. John felt more and more the substantial honesty of his vows. Those finespun discussions about property and its limits seemed silly and irrelevant. The life he was living was a fact. Francis Innovator, as Brother Aymon liked to call him, had opened the way to an experience that defied every convention. To obey his vows was to live forever in the freshness of the morning. It was salvation; it was peace; even to the not infrequent hardships, it was the best fun in the world.

Brother Aymon, though his habit was the shabbiest among the travelers, was perhaps too much the scholar to feel the pleasure of full human freedom. Moreover, he seemed abstracted, and John found it still impossible

to cast off restraint in his presence. But he felt no restraint anywhere else. With his irresistible smile and his eager friendliness, he was discovering something which as Sieur de Sanfort he had never known — the pure joy of human intercourse.

And presently a wonderful thing befell him. He had turned with loathing from possessions private and unshared. He had even rejected the desire to appropriate learning. But suddenly, without his choice, he found himself in possession of a secret treasure. The proprium reasserted itself once more; John, not knowing what he did, again said "mine." He gained a friend.

This happened in Paris, and it was good to have a pleasant experience in that city, which, in his present mood, he found depressing, absorbed as it was in discussion about the abstract things of the mind. The delegation had paused there, that Aymon might discuss the situation concerning Brother Elias with certain masters in the University. John attended the meetings, and was puzzled anew by the bitterness shown toward the Bombarone. Was it perhaps due to the fact that Aymon and these Paris men, clerics all, were keen on keeping the control of the Order in priestly hands? Elias, on the other hand, carefully promoted laymen, and John, always a little inclined to the off side, wondered if Francis would have minded. It was also clear that Elias supported the desire of the Pope to keep the university studies on rigid traditional lines, while here, as at Oxford, many friars wished to handle

their Aristotle with more freedom. But to master these subtleties was too much for John. He took refuge, as his nature impelled, in the observation of persons, and spent his Paris days in frequenting the lectures of the great Franciscan, Brother Alexander of Hales — not so much following the close discussions concerning the plurality of substantial forms or the universality of matter as watching the audience.

For these lectures were crowded with the most interesting men in Paris. The friars, sons of Francis and Dominic, had stormed the University twenty years earlier, and were drawing the mass of students to them, to the dismay of the elder masters. Brother Alexander was the most distinguished. John admired the breadth and freedom with which he harmonized Aristotle with the Augustinian interpretation of truth. He was reminded of Roger Bacon, with his lean, dry face, his incisive speech, his snapping eyes. But Bacon's approach through the phenomena of the visible world was alien to the finespun metaphysics current at Paris.

John's attention would stray, in spite of his efforts, from the lecturer to the hearers.

Two students in particular arrested him. One was a youth perhaps a year or two younger than himself, with a countenance of heavenly sweetness.

"Father," he said one evening to Aymon, who had also been in attendance on the lecture, "I think I never saw a face of such angelic purity as that of the boy who sits directly beneath Master Alexander, rapt in his every word."

Brother Aymon assented. "Brother Bonaventura. He is an amazement to us all. A brother professed, though a mere stripling, and able to outwit any of us at the *disputa*. The Lord has given this grace to Brother Bonaventura, that every one who sees him must love him. Brother Alexander says that he was born without the sin of Adam."

He was looking at John a little curiously. "You are as English in type as he Italian," said he. John winced. Why should he be mentioned just then?

Bonaventura fascinated him. But the great gift brought him by Paris was the friendship of another; and in later years he blessed these days because in them his life first touched the life of Pierre Triane.

Not at the centre but at the side of the lecture hall sat this young friar, in a seat far at the back. There was nothing to attract attention to the thin figure, the inert face, young yet with a strange suggestion of age about it, the half-closed, heavy-lidded eyes. He sat as one half asleep, with drooping countenance.

John had noted him from the first day, and had wondered whether the sodden face ever brightened.

The time came for the weekly disputation, where students bandied arguments while the lecturer sat silent and attent. The subject was the eternity of matter. Back and forth hurled the *sic*, the *non*, the *distinguo*. Of a sudden a shrill voice called: —

"Leave this barren talk, my masters! Leave this pagan thought! It will lead you to deny the survival of your own soul! Listen rather to the holy Abbot

Joachim. Behold the age of the Spirit is at hand! We who are of the Religion of the blessed Francis, we who speak for the Holy Ghost Himself, shall we concern us with empty disputations?"

The speaker was silenced. The current of the discussion ran once more between its neat scholastic banks. But John had seen a marvelous thing. Swift as the sun rising above the edges of the world, the eyes of the unknown brother had opened — eyes curiously blue, prominent, eyes that gave out light rather than received impressions, the most remarkable eyes, John thought, that he had ever seen. They were windows in a cavernous blank, for the face was impassive still. But those eyes caught his own and held them fast. It was a moment John was never to forget.

The certainty that for one instant spirit had met spirit beyond the bounds of matter did not last. It was superseded presently by a human relation. For when the little company set forth again on the morrow, Brother Pierre was with them, to John's surprised joy. He had, it seemed, received from Brother Aymon permission to join the group. And John repressed his curiosity, content that Pierre was there, glad that in the pleasant intimacy of the road he proved simple and lovable, if always a little evasive. The lingering look of youth — he was about ten years older than John — overcame in daily intercourse the strange impression his face had conveyed of registering long experience. The two, nearest of age in the party, were soon much together as the group trudged on.

Silence, shared with Pierre, was charged with meanings, and talk was not less rich. John knew for the first time the magical spell of an intense personal affection. His mind had delighted in striking sparks from the mind of Bacon; but in converse with this new friend the whole being, not the mind alone, was flooded with radiance. To trudge by Pierre's side along the dusty poplar-bordered roads, to share with him the labors or the begging of the day, above all to kneel by him at mass, was to know sufficiency. Reverence blended with love. John was a sound sleeper in those days, but whenever he waked at night he was likely to find his new friend on his knees. Pierre was one who walked with God and lived absorbed in prayer.

Pierre was from Provence; as a boy, he had traveled in the East. He was not so much concerned as John had been with the externals of the Religion. To the young Englishman the renunciation of his property had been not only a supreme joy, but an important event. Whether Pierre had ever had any property or not, John did not know; but he perceived that to slough off possessions would be as casual an act to his new friend as to wash his hands. Material things seemed irrelevant to Pierre. Very ascetic, he yet appeared to fast more from inadvertence than principle. John felt coarse beside him. Pierre was the most thorough exponent of Saint Francis' ideal of poverty that he had ever met.

But they were in the flesh after all, and on John fell, as the journey proceeded, various practical responsi-

bilities which the most simplified life could not avoid. Pierre was not well. He walked with difficulty, was subject to times of exhaustion in which he lagged behind the others or almost fell by the road. Rallying, supported by John's arm, tenderly watched by him, he would move for a time so swiftly that the others would be left behind, talking all the time, in speech eager, vibrant, illumined, only to flag once more, and turn piteously to his comrade. He came to depend on John with almost childlike confidence. To be needed! It was a new delight to the young Englishman.

Life with Pierre was a series of exquisite surprises; he had a way of saying romantic things out of a clear sky.

"Did I ever know myself till I knew you, brother?" he said one day. And again: "I had been seeking you long. I had lost you. I was lonely."

"Lost me?" wondered John. "But you had never known me."

Pierre lifted those heavy lids, and the light large orbs held John's brown ones. "Are you so sure?" said he.

"At all events," John sighed, putting aside the puzzle, "my life that was half is now whole." And to himself he thought, "This blessed household of faith has given me many good things. But the greatest is you. For you are mine, Pierre, mine forever. In you I have all riches, in you I have my home."

It was a sentiment over which wise Adam Marsh, had he heard it, would have shaken his head.

The talk as they trudged along was much of the Order. Concerning the exact circumstances of his joining, Pierre was reticent, but the Religion of Francis had evidently not seemed so unique to him as it had to John. In Provence, and elsewhere indeed, there were, it seemed, many groups pledged like the friars to poverty. Strange names they bore, which John learned in these long tramps southward: Patarini, Bogomili, Tortolani. And strange ideals they held. Pierre had grown up as the son of a weaver in a little town where these ideas were common. John listened, fascinated, to his account of them. He had never heard of such folk in England. Some groups, it seemed, condemned everyone who possessed land. Some claimed that all baptized men were priests, others — amazing and shocking thought! — held that women also shared the priestly office. Some dressed in white and roamed as vagrants, some scourged themselves, singing, till the blood flowed. There were those who believed human souls to be fallen angels, passing through a probation at the end of which they might regain their lost Paradise. Others — Pierre cast at John a sidewise, piteous glance — thought that one spirit had inhabited diverse bodies down the ages, in sad pilgrimage of expiation for ancient guilt. To nearly all, it seemed, the physical world was accursed, though one sect, the Bogomili, held part of matter to be God-created, and believed in the final triumph of good. Like the sons of Francis, they all turned in horror from property and from war; but they differed

from the friars in that, with one accord, — and here John's loyal mind received a shock, — they viewed the Church Catholic and her hierarchy with bitter distrust. Her temporal possessions were an offense to them. Many of them disapproved of all private ownership on the part of priests, wishing ecclesiastical property to revert to the State, that it might be administered for the common benefit.

John, listening, understood what Brother Aymon had meant when he spoke of Brother Elias' services in holding the sons of Francis true to the Church.

But Pierre had much to say of the great holiness of these people, especially of the great numbers known as Cathari, who seemed almost to form a Church of their own. They practised severe austerities. Strange secrets were revealed to their initiates. They soothed the dying with rites to exorcise and purify; perfection was their goal. Torture, death, they faced unflinching, and Pierre told the spellbound John how an uncle of his had been burned at the stake as an heretic, in Carcassonne. Very white was Pierre as he told this story.

"He never flinched, my uncle. He sang, from within that wall of flame. And the song — ah, it passed into a scream! I hear that scream forever," shuddered Pierre. They were walking through a level land at sunset, between long rows of slender trees. John listened, horror-struck.

"A fearsome thing," he hesitated. "Yet — must not heresy be ended? Better that one should burn here than that thousands receiving falsehood burn forever in hell."

Pierre turned his face full on him, the large lids closed. "There were one hundred burnings in Carcassonne that year," said he. "Does Love deal thus with Sin?" And the friends were silent. It seemed to John more than ever that Pierre moved like a luminous shadow among men of flesh. But at last he spoke again.

"Those of whom you tell me seem to me heretics all."

"Sometimes I wonder if we too are not heretics," returned Pierre, with his cryptic look. "We tread new paths. The regulars distrust us. If our ideas prevailed, the world as we know it would vanish away."

"Francis Innovator!" John agreed. "And I know some of us dream strange dreams. Yet our strength is not in our dreams, but in our love. Does not the heretic value his dream more than his Lord?"

The look on Pierre's face deepened. "Did you note," said he, "the name uttered in the classroom the other day? The name of Joachim de Flores?"

"It was then that our eyes met," said John.

Pierre said no more. John walked abstracted, his mind in turmoil. He was uneasy, for he had a creeping fear that Pierre had been touched by these strange faiths he described so well. There was something in his friend's past which was sealed to him. Pierre had inflamed his imagination. As he spoke of cloudy spiritual hierarchies, the air was vibrant with unseen wings. The orthodox Other World was obscured by a vision of planes within planes of mystery, and the perspective

of his own existence stretched back into the Unknown behind his human birth. But from these vaporous imaginings, blended as they were with sharp criticism of the Church and her rulers, John's thought recoiled. It reverted of a sudden to Bacon's peering, ugly face, to Bacon's direct matter-of-fact interest in the visible and tangible world — and found refreshment. Bacon was so honest!

Pierre for John had far more charm, but he could not put the lean figure of the other out of his mind. Between the two, he had been swept far away from conventional thinking, out into a swift current where great winds were blowing free. He was released in his mind, as he had been released in his life by Francis. Bacon and Pierre, scientist and mystic, radicals both, at odds, both of them, with the stiff formalities of thinking that prevailed in Church, in University, and in society at large, agreed in their sharp criticism of the worldly Church, in their hatred of the gift of Constantine. John began to be one with them in their sorrow, in their challenge. But he clung desperately, as indeed did both Bacon and Pierre, to belief that sorrow at shortcomings and a passionate renewal of life might be combined with loyalty to the sanctities of old.

"Pierre, why did you choose to join the family of Francis rather than one of the other groups known to your childhood?" he dared to ask one day. "Is it because with us you found love purer than elsewhere? Was it, as I hope, because we are more true to Holy Church?"

Pierre shook his head. "Of these matters I fear I did not think," he replied. "I entered the family of Francis when very young. It was because I was rescued from great evil by one, a son of Francis, who drew me into his fellowship." That veil behind which John could never peer fell over his face as he spoke.

II

NEW RENOUNCEMENTS

From this swirl of speculation and experience, John escaped with relief into the joy of the present hour. For Italy, the goal of their journeying, drew near.

> (Soft within the circle of light in the prison cell shone the long roads reaching southward. Poplar yielding to olive; little walled towns on the hilltops; large white oxen with their curving horns; cypresses, solemn delight to English eyes; a gentler blue in the sky; and gray-robed figures, buoyant, young, treading those dusty ways in love and happiness.)

Pierre too had not seen Italy. As they approached, both young men moved softly, feeling themselves pilgrims to a Holy Land. Assisi! One in the East, another among Cornish mists, had caught the light that streamed from that small Umbrian town.

"You will not see Father Francis," said Brother Aymon, falling a little behind with them. The mere promise of Italian air seemed to release him for the moment from the sad constraint in which he had been enwrapped during the journey. "He knows a fairer

land than Umbria. But you are fortunate, my sons, for you shall see his first companions. Brother Leo is far away, I fear, but Rufino you shall meet, and possibly Brother Bernard, and Brother Giles on his Perugian hill."

"Brother Elias also knew the Father personally," said John with a touch of mischief. "Perhaps we shall be privileged to see him also."

Aymon looked pained; the old constraint descended on him.

"I am not sure, Father, that I shall not side with Elias," John went on lightly, yet half meaning what he said. "If that great church is as splendid as they say, my first prayers in Assisi may give thanks for the man who built it."

"Side with Elias! Do you condone the tyranny of those visitors he has forced on us?" exclaimed an English brother named Nicholas, who had joined the group.

"Why be troubled by them?" pondered John impatiently. "They cannot touch our inward freedom. I declare, I think the spirit has more liberty when restrictions from without are imposed on it. Life is simpler so. I have wondered all along, and I said so to Father Adam, why we made such a to-do about those visitors. And I truly feel that there is much to be said for Brother Elias."

"Indolence is not liberty. Nor is freedom privilege, but rather responsibility," commented Brother Aymon sharply; and John, looking at his suffering face, repented him of his perversity.

"Eh! I confess that there are other brothers I long to see more than I do Elias," he acknowledged.

Aymon had withdrawn into silence, and John, a little embarrassed, turned to Pierre, attempting a diversion.

"And you, Pierre. Whom do you most keenly wish to see at Assisi?" he asked.

Pierre had been pacing along, sullen and morose. Now at John's question came that sudden lifting of the eyelids. "Whom would I see?" he cried, raising his arms to heaven, "I would see Brother Cæsar! Cæsar, my rescuer, Cæsar my friend; Cæsar of whom I stand in utter need!" And as he spoke he dropped to his knees before a passing shrine, in passion of prayer and of swift weeping. His companions gathered around, amazed.

"Cæsar! Lord have mercy on us! Lord, heal me! Jesu, Mary, set him free!" cried Pierre, beating his breast.

John gazed aghast, exiled from this sorrow. Who was this Brother Cæsar? Ah, he remembered. The indignant tale at Oxford — how Elias had imprisoned one Cæsar of Spires, and kept him at Assisi in duress. Pierre, quieted by his prayer, had risen. John drew near shyly. But Pierre turned from him with an abrupt gesture, and Brother Aymon, putting him aside none too gently, rested his hand on the French boy's shoulder.

"Courage! I keep my promises, my son. You shall see Cæsar." Murmurs of sympathy arose from the group, and the march was resumed, Pierre walking

with bowed head. His steps had grown markedly more feeble during the last day or two. But John sought in vain to keep near him, in vain offered a supporting arm. To whichever side of the road he moved, Pierre moved to another.

"I grieve, Pierre! I did not know —" he stammered.

Pierre faced him, almost savagely. "You spoke of a church. What is a church beside the life of a man?"

"Imprisoned by his own familiar friend," brooded Brother Aymon sombrely. He was watching Pierre with solicitude.

"Cæsar was greatly needed," said Brother Nicholas. "Leo lives in memories, they say, writing records of the early days. Giles upon Monte Ripido contents himself with sharp sayings and rhapsodies. Brother Bernard is content to follow our Rule by himself, as it were, in the forest. But Cæsar is younger; he is a man of action; he cares for the life of the whole body; he might bring those good early days back again. Wherefore the Bombarone has clapped him into jail."

"Perhaps you will clap me into jail some day, John," muttered Pierre. He spoke bitterly — but it was something to be spoken to at all.

"Perhaps some brother will clap me in," John retorted. "Perhaps I shall end in prison. Oof! To be shut away from the sky, the air! Death were better far."

"Cæsar, they say, is allowed a little airing every day," said Brother Nicholas. He was a literal-minded man.

"Yes," said Aymon. "Take comfort, Pierre my son. From all accounts, the imprisonment is light, and the jailer is Brother John de Laudibus."

"Brother John of the Larks, whom Francis loved so well?" asked Brother Nicholas, and went on with a quotation as Aymon nodded: "'Thus spake Francis: He is the perfect friar who should have the faith of Brother Bernard, with the love of charity of Brother Angelo, the wisdom and devout eloquence of Brother Masseo, the lofty mind of Brother Giles, the continuous prayer of Brother Rufino, the patience of Brother Juniper, the corporal and spiritual fortitude of Brother John de Laudibus.'

"I have seen him," he continued. "A man of great stature and strength. But it is strange that one who loves our sisters the larks should be a jailer. I have heard that he has a harsh temper."

Brother Aymon frowned the speaker into silence. "I think we can depend on Brother John of the Larks to make the imprisonment light," he said consolingly. And Pierre, quiet once more, smiled a little.

"If any prisoner could command his jailer's love, it would be Cæsar," he reflected.

Pierre was in fever that night. A dread seemed on him. He recoiled from John like a sick animal. "Healing! Jesu, mercy! Brother Cæsar, Brother Cæsar!" he cried over and over. "Cæsar! Wounded in the house of his friends!" John, watching in still misery, took the words to himself. Why did Pierre shrink from his touch? Had he so suddenly become

repugnant? Had the love that bound them been illusion, to be shattered by a few thoughtless words? He could not understand. An emotion he had never known before possessed him. Sharp-fanged jealousy knows no reason and no peace.

The patient slept toward morning, and John slipped out beneath the paling stars. Mechanically he wandered on a little along the southern road, morosely climbed over the crest of a little hill. Absorbed in jealous pain, a bird note roused him suddenly to realize unfamiliar sights. The trees on the farther slope — small they were and stunted, but of foliage very fine, mist gray, ghost gray, in the ghostly light of dawn.

Olive trees? Brother Aymon had said they would be seen on the morrow.

The trees on which the eyes of Jesus had rested! It was to John as if he had stumbled on Gethsemane. The surface of his life might be controlled by one or another passionate emotion; but in the depths one love, one ardor, reigned supreme. He fell on his knees, overswept by shame and love. There in the dawn twilight came to him his first dim comprehension of the sad words of Brother Thomas. The Secret of Naughting! And what had Brother Lawrence said of a Way beset with thorns?

Ever after, the common sight of olive trees would revive in John memory of his entrance into the more secret shrine of Lady Poverty; for he saw his love to Pierre poisoned by greed, that fierce and subtle foe.

Solitude penetrated his spirit as an icy wind can penetrate the body. *Nudus nudam crucem!* Depths beyond depths the great words unfolded. He prayed as he had never prayed before, perceiving that he was at the beginning only of his spiritual pilgrimage. To escape the lure of the proprium in the material world had, as he now saw, been simple; nor had that lure drawn him too strongly on intellectual levels. But to escape it in the affections — "O Thou who in Gethsemane among the olives didst tread the winepress alone, while Thy friends slumbered, have mercy upon me!"

To recognize is not to overcome. John was never to have an easy time with his affections. Outward possessions can be renounced once for all, but craving for the possessions of the heart is driven out only to creep back in new guise forever. Yet recognition of weakness is in itself a source of calm; and it was in peace sad as the encircling horizons that John, wearing a sprig of olive in his breast, drew near to Italy on the morrow. As they climbed slopes from which distant Apennines gleamed amethyst, his spirit was permitted to rest in such light as renunciation alone reveals. He found himself loving Pierre without desire! John was proud. To withdraw inwardly into indifference would have been quite possible. He did a harder thing. Closer than ever he drew into inward union with his friend, while at the same time he respected the mysterious impulse which kept Pierre more and more in isolation.

For Pierre had been able, though feebly, to continue the walking, but still he avoided John, avoided indeed all his comrades, slipped to the other side of the road if one came near. John sadly accepted a situation which he could not comprehend, paced beside Brother Nicholas, and beguiled the time by questions about Cæsar.

It was Brother Cæsar, he learned, who had admitted Pierre into the Order. He had met the lad in the East, had healed him — so Brother Nicholas had heard — of some fearful nervous malady, had drawn him into the Franciscan fold. Cæsar himself had not long been a friar at that time. He had been leader of a sect of his own. Restless desire to press Christianity to the limit had driven him in extreme youth to the life of a wandering preacher. His eloquence attracted many disciples, especially among women, and perhaps these feminine devotees became importunate. In any case, he roamed to the Orient, that magnet of wistful souls, and there came in contact with the gentler gospel of Francis. It spoke well, John thought, for Cæsar's nobility, that instantly he abandoned his independent movement, to become a humble follower of the Poverello.

Brother Elias had admitted Cæsar, and they had been close friends. But Francis himself had soon drawn Cæsar into his special friendship. The recruit accepted, as indeed he had probably held from the first, the severest absolutism of the master. It was a story full of pain to which John listened, as the little

company trudged on, over roads increasingly white and dusty, into a sunlight ever more intense.

Francis had returned from the East to find a terrible change in his brothers. The spirit of Brother Elias was at work, even though Elias himself was at this time absent. Modifications of the Rule were in order, some of them so obviously demanded by common sense that they were hard for even the Little Poor Man to condemn in detail; but they broke his heart. Many a touching story revealed his indignant and piteous suffering. Brother Cæsar, as well as nearly all the early brothers, had held to him loyally. And when Cardinal Ugolino, now our Holy Father Pope Gregory IX, had persuaded Francis to compose a new Rule, it was to Cæsar that he had turned for help. Ever since as before that hour, Cæsar had remained faithful to Francis, uncompromising in his devotion to poverty. And now Brother Elias had thrown him in prison, and Francis' well-loved John of the Larks was the jailer! Hard is it when love unites those whom opinion divides.

It was the natural result of the struggle through which John himself had just passed, that he felt with peculiar intensity in the story of those times the reiterated tragedy of severed affections. In the rare intimacy of the Order, men had thought to escape the sundering floods across which poor human beings forever seek to hail one another. Fatuous hope! For at every point cruel separations appeared. John looked wistfully at the sombre figure of Pierre, hurrying alone in advance of the others, as if driven by sharp inward stress. But

it was sign perhaps of some measure of inward victory that he did not dwell only on his own pain. "Wounded in the house of his friends" — how the words applied to the tender heart of Francis, to many among his followers! Must all his sons tread after him the lonely, thorny way?

John's eyes sought Brother Aymon, moving along as usual with remote and hampered air. He had not loved Aymon, but his heart ached for him. Always he remembered the agitation and reluctance with which this mission of protest against Brother Elias had been undertaken, always knew that the stern countenance hid a spirit bracing itself for sharp ordeal. Oh that it might be granted him to bring comfort to Aymon! That might not be — and with a sigh John put these sad thoughts aside. For the heart, especially when young, cannot play forever on one string of its many-stringed harp.

If anything could restore a lost harmony, it would be Italy. Private griefs, tense expectation of an impending crisis in the Order, faded from the souls of the devoted pilgrims as they entered the lovely land. This pilgrimage to the sacred shrines of Umbria renewed the heavenly freedom of the first good hours.

The beauty of the country was of course an element in his peace. The land in every inch showed patient love and care. While the great of the earth fought to possess it, the little ones tended it, and were the true inheritors according to the promise to the meek. Under the wars of Pope and Emperor, under the feuds

of the nobles, the no less violent quarrels of the towns, the poor folk bowed: fought when it was demanded of them, suffered patiently, then resumed the tilling of the sacred soil. Ah! To belong in spirit and in truth to these humble ones — what blessedness John found in it! They saw, as they walked, little misery. Here in Umbria all natural life had the same look, serene, devout, and free. The very oxen, mild and gray, with broad brows and gentle eyes, had a ludicrous likeness in expression to the gray-habited friars now met in increasing numbers on the road. More poignantly perhaps on account of his recent personal renunciation, John at this stage of his journey experienced that fragrant savor of the common life which only he who has lost himself in it, with no personal reserves, can taste in its full sweetness.

Such sweetness is sometimes vouchsafed to solitary age; for him who tastes it, loneliness is not. The friar needed not to wait for age. Francis inspired his votaries to realize the rare union of a personal aloofness from life, complete as that of the monk, with warmest sympathies. Brother John, young and eager, looked with no envy on the lovers encountered by the way. To be a monk was sometimes to despise more or less superciliously the normal affections; to be a friar was to help young couples get married!

Coming from England, with its Northern quality in landscape, John felt in this region a constant suggestion of a holier land than Umbria, of paths trodden by a Greater than Francis. The houses, built often of

massive ancient blocks, the people, the very donkeys, had a hint of the dreamed-of East. Small episodes in daily country life had a symbolic beauty. Now it was two children playing with a tiny lamb; now a *contadina* with a waterpot on her head, who might well have been a Hebrew maiden.

"Dear Father, be not so sad," he ventured one day to say to Brother Aymon. They were walking side by side along a stony way, lifted gently above the wide receding plain. Their leader, as so often, had fallen into abstracted brooding; it grieved John to see his face, with its constant look of inward sorrow.

Aymon paid no heed. John twitched his gown gently. "See, Father," he went on. "The shining hills! Do not gaze always on the path. The country sings this morning the Lauds of Francis."

In effect, two brothers behind were crooning the canticle of the Sun. John joined them in his pleasant tones: "Praised be Our Lord God for our mother, the Earth."

Where words had failed, song succeeded. Aymon in his aging voice was joining in the hymn.

"Father," said John presently, "You have known many lands. Does each have its own language, like this country, like our own?"

Aymon, roused for once, looked almost affectionately at the delicate young face beside him. "Can you read the language of Umbria, John?" asked he.

John mused before replying. "It speaks, or rather it sings, with a note too pure for my hearing. I listen,

but I can repeat nothing. The music of this country is a strain from Elsewhere. I have dreamed — am I wrong? — that the same strain is heard in Palestine."

Aymon looked startled, then made a gesture of assent.

"Umbria is in truth a Holy Land," said he, "You are not the first to feel it. Nor was Francis, though surely it was arranged in heavenly places that here and not elsewhere should he be born. Have you heard the story of the four saintly men from the East? Long centuries ago, having visited Rome, they desired on their way back to rest in some hermitage, and the Pope sent them to the Valley of Spoleto, and there they built a tiny chapel to St. Mary of Jehoshaphat, and lived content for years before they sought Jerusalem once more. And on the site of their chapel is our own beloved Portiuncula, our Church of the Little Portion, which Saint Francis repaired with his own hands."

Not more than an hour later, they gazed from under twisted olive trees of secular growth, across to where a shade of rose deepened in the sheltered embrace of a long mountain side. Brother Aymon called his little group to halt. Silently he pointed.

"Is it —?" John murmured, and did not finish his question. Brother Aymon signed assent.

"'*Non dica Assisi ma Ascesi,*'" chanted one, using words which a greater than he, the supreme poet of Italy, was to borrow.

"In very truth," whispered John, "there is our East. Thence rose our sun." And the pilgrim company, even Pierre with face illumined, fell on their knees.

"Praised be our Lord God for all his saints. Praised be our Lord God for Brother Francis," intoned Aymon in his old voice. And the pilgrims repeated the Laud in glad accord.

III

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

"It is of marvelous beauty," said John. He was gazing, with Brother Aymon and Pierre, at the great church, gleaming in the sunset, that rose with solemn dignity into the illumined sky.

He was glad that Pierre was beside him. Since the arrival the day before, his friend had vanished; nor had John allowed himself to be troubled, for he was accustomed by now to Pierre's difficult behavior. During the last days of their journey Pierre had grown more and more strange. John would catch those heavy-lidded eyes fixed on him from a distance with an extraordinary expression of agonized appeal. But if, with eager response, he sought to draw near in the old familiar way, his friend would evade him abruptly, for in those days Pierre walked alone. Once a narrow path, winding among the vineyards, promised a shortening of the road, and the company turned into it, Brother Aymon consenting. John lingered for Pierre, who loitered with uncertain step behind. "Pierre! This way! It is pleasant! It is shorter!" he called impatiently. But the other shuddered. "It is too

narrow! The broad way for me henceforth!" he cried with a catch of the breath, wringing his hands. John had followed him, as in stumbling haste he ran around the sweep of the curve, until the others, who had emerged from the short cut, were once more within sight.

All this was strange. But since Assisi had been reached, perplexing matters had faded from John's mind in the wondrous sense of home-coming which had possessed him. And this evening it seemed as quietly natural as meetings in Paradise must seem, to find Pierre at his side.

John, with others of his countrymen, had felt in England the thrill of escape from the sombre heaviness of twelfth-century construction. He had with delight in his own castle superintended the treatment of the chapel in a modern style, marked by the lightness of line and restrained purity of the early Gothic. The cathedral at Exeter, finished about twenty-five years earlier, was massive Norman, with great transeptal towers, and he had not cared for it. Quite different from anything he had ever seen was Elias' masterpiece. Nor at the moment was he aware of any human origin, for, satisfying and inevitable as a mighty cloud or a mountain modeled by the hand of God, the great church crowned its hill, massive without sombreness, simple of line, with wide surfaces lovely in color that responded to the lights cast by the sky, much as quiet waters do — perhaps the noblest monument ever raised to the glory of a holy life.

"Of marvelous beauty." John lingered over the words.

"An insult to Francis, and to God." Pierre's voice choked with passion. John faced him, annoyed, and perceived that he was in a state of shattering excitement. But the church was still the foreground of John's thought. He spoke appealingly to Aymon: —

"Our Father Francis loved all loveliness. As for God, does He not wish His sons to share His impulse of creation?"

But Brother Aymon's smile was for Pierre. On John he bent rebuking eyes.

"Pierre is right. This church is a crime," said he shortly.

John was in a persistent mood. "But why?" he urged. "Shall not the stones be made to sing praises? And did not Francis repair churches with his own hands?"

Aymon spoke dryly: "I see that you have forgotten his injunctions."

"Was not your soul moved to prayer in those low vaults within? Did you not dream the very walls were covered with visions of the life of Francis? I believe they will be so, some day!" said John, still in transport.

Pierre paid no heed. "Had I only been by when Brother Leo shattered the marble vase placed for the offerings!" he cried, his large light eyes burning. "More than a vase would have been shattered. Let the arrogance that built this outrage be destroyed! Let it be cast forth from the land of the living!"

Aymon placed a restraining hand on him. "Do not blame Brother Elias unduly," sighed he. "It was not arrogance alone, nor desire for self-glory, that built this shrine on the Hill of Hell. Very true is his devotion to Francis, and also his delight in noble handiwork."

"I should like to throw a stone at his portrait there above — kneeling large as life at the feet of the Crucified!" said Pierre bitterly. "No other pictures can I imagine, for that holds my gaze. You will tell me, I suppose, that humility placed it there."

And Aymon sighed. "Judge not," said he.

John was murmuring to himself, mutinous, "Our Lord Christ worshiped gladly in the Temple at Jerusalem, which was of great majesty. Francis did not refuse to preach in the cathedral dedicated to San Rufino in this very town." And the two young men cast alien glances at each other.

Moods were tense on that hill, and Aymon, who could ill brook contradiction from his juniors, and who knew his private sorrow, turned sharply on John.

"Brother John, you offend. You are under discipline," said he. The hard look from which John always shrank was on his fine-lined face.

The young Englishman gasped. Under discipline? This first day in this holy spot, the sanctuary of his love? Cruel, cruel and unjust! So his rueful heart was saying, but he controlled his face, clasped his hands on his breast, bowed his head in token of submission. And perhaps in that sea of consciousness

below our ken, in which spirits are one as drops in the ocean, his feeling reached the other; for the face of the older man softened, and a little humor played about his narrow lips as he finished his rebuke.

"You are to seek in the plain the Portiuncula, the Church of the Little Portion, and spend the night in vigil there," said Brother Aymon of Feversham. And he continued solemnly: —

"A choice awaits you. Choose you this night whom you will serve."

As with hands still crossed John bowed lower in token of holy obedience, he knew that what was enjoined on him was less duty than privilege; for all the brothers longed to spend solitary hours in the dear shrine repaired by Francis' hands.

He started swiftly, and although he knew nothing of the path except that it must drop down through the vines and olives to the oak woods of the plain, his feet moved without hesitation. The dusk approached. It seemed to rise to meet him from the valley below. Presently he heard steps hurrying behind him. There was Pierre. The anger was gone from his eyes, but the wild look lingered, and that extraordinary aura which often invested him, and which had fascinated John from the first, was almost visible in the gathering twilight.

"Brother!" he called, "Brother!" His tones were vibrating with love. John waited. Eyes caught in eyes the old deep sense of union. No words of reconciliation passed, nor were they needed.

"I have seen Brother Cæsar," gasped Pierre. "You are not to ask me how. Brother Aymon does not fail of his promises. Within the prison hell in which Cæsar's body lives, I met the heaven of his spirit. It is a noisome prison. What think you? He is kept in irons! Brother Cæsar! I came to the church, intent to claim your aid — I found you speaking of beauty! I beheld that church, a devil's lure. Beware! Beware! Love not the earth so gayly! The earth, the flesh —"

A shiver passed over him. The look of horror which John had noted once or twice on the road fleeted across his face. "The earth! The flesh! See them aright, foul prison of the soul!" he cried, in odd tones, high and nasal.

John did not speak.

Pierre peered weirdly into his friend's shocked face. "Have I not always told you?" he repeated. "In vain can even a saint seek to love this earth and to love God also. The earth, the flesh," and now he spoke in undertone scarcely audible, as one imparting a tragic secret, "the earth, the flesh — they are corrupt, unclean."

Abruptly he dropped John's arm and moved to a distance, passing his hand over his forehead.

"Go, keep your watch." He spoke now louder, but with curious emphasis. "Go, keep your watch — but note the hour of Lauds."

He was gone, and John continued on his way. How often, as now, Pierre had rasped him! Not love the

earth in its loveliness? The flesh corrupt and unclean? No! He should continue to sing praises of the creatures, with Francis. His healthy, even-pulsing youth, a-tingle with harmony, stepped on buoyant, as he inhaled rhythmically the pure fragrances of the evening wind. Surely it was better to build fair churches with Elias than to curse the dear earth with Pierre? John was confused.

The shade of the woods which he was now entering recalled the sacred glooms of the lower church on the hill. John sighed, and put questions away, for he saw suddenly before him in the uncertain light the goal of his seeking. What he had first taken for a pile of low bowlders was evidently the little shrine which was the heart of their worship to the sons of Francis. Descriptions had made him know it well — the small hut of the Little Portion, intact still, and unadorned, as the saint had left it.

Here was the spot where, as legend ran, angels had sung on the night of Francis' birth. Deeply moved, John entered, reverently touched the walls, knelt before the altar. Yes, peace was closer here than in the great church on the hill — here, where the impact of the Spirit was mediated through no glory manifest to sense. Of such peace the place was full. How often those hands, the wounded hands of Francis, had been uplifted here! And not his prayers only, his prayers most precious, but the ascending prayers of countless pilgrims had left their perfume, sensibly sanctifying the darkness. John lifted upstretched

arms, and opened his soul to the healing. He had come to the very habitation of Love, and the moments flowed by, a tranquil, soundless stream. All personal pain, all troubled thoughts, had been left outside. "This shall be my abode forever. Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." Such were the last words John consciously repeated; but they were faint, submerged. Words were no longer; consciousness had ceased. The soul, lost, had found its life. Images were few — were none. For the first time in his experience, a hint of Union, the mystic's ultimate desire, was vouchsafed to John.

The moments passed. Or were they years? Time was no more.

A voice teased him within — clear, faint, and far away. "A choice," it said. "A choice." And over and over, "A choice awaits. Choose you this night." He could not drive it off.

Must he return to thought, breaking that utter stillness of the mind which was his bliss? Could peace and freedom never be sustained? Must the spirit, in the very instant that it knew itself denizen of eternity, force its way back deliberately to the stormy zone of time?

Alas! Yes! Even the sense of duty can be deadly foe to the intuitions of the soul. John had been sent here to make a decision, and his reluctant mind must be summoned back to its activities.

Well enough he understood what Brother Aymon meant his choice to involve. For all the talk on the way

from Oxford to Assisi had made clearer and clearer the severance between those literal yet imaginative men who wished to obey the Rule in stark entirety, "without gloss, without gloss, without gloss," as Francis had said, and the men of the middle way, who had behind them the best authorities of Christendom, from the Pope down. For had not Gregory, Francis' own cherished friend, endorsed in his bull, *Quo Elongati*, policies over which the saint would cruelly grieve? The matter was deeper than one's attitude toward Brother Elias. John was not even sure where, on large lines, Aymon himself would be placed — Aymon, who shrank from mendicancy, who endorsed study, who stood for clerical control of the Order.

Elias' creation on the hill and this little Portiuncula were true symbols — that noble church, this rude cell. Why not rejoice in both, as God's good gifts to diverse needs, varied speech of the adoring soul? But no, that could not be.

John became aware — or rather, knew that he had been aware a long time — that he was not alone in the chapel. Francis too was kneeling there, keeping vigil in the place he loved. "Of course," John said to himself. "He is in Paradise, and his Paradise must hold the Portiuncula." He saw that the outstretched hands of Francis were pierced, as his own were not. "In Paradise?" he pondered; and knew at once the answer. "Assuredly. Was not Thomas bidden to put his hand in the prints of the nails after the Lord had risen?"

Another was kneeling beside Francis, all but lost in the shadow. A woman. She was wan and ragged, but John clearly perceived that she too was in Paradise.

"Lady Poverty! Have I been unfaithful to you?

"For you I have tossed away all that men hold dear — rank, lady, wealth, and worldly honor.

"Yes! Your silence tells me that this cost me little or nothing: that it was more relief than pain to be rid of these things. But there are other goods. You have been teaching me hard lessons lately. To renounce the wealth within, the love to which one clings! To claim naught as mine own! Lady! I fail, I falter; but, God helping me, I will persevere. Well you know that I shall never rest content till I have learned to love without desire.

"Are you not satisfied, madonna? There are other gifts, I know. Learning, dear madonna. Shall it not glorify God, and reveal Him? Beauty, madonna! May we not build temples in your honor and in honor of your lover Francis? Do you quite disdain that temple on the hill? Your image shall dwell there, madonna, wedded to your lover forever — live over the high altar, treading among thorns as you love to tread, your gown ragged as now, the same look in your haggard face, potent to draw to you the sons of men. Shall you not be glad? For many, seeing you there, shall love you and be moved to follow.

"*Miserere mihi Domine!* Lord, have mercy upon me! Lord, have mercy upon Brother Elias! Have mercy on me, for I fear that I am of his party!

"Lady! Surely you do not wish to say that one cannot love the earth and love God also? Will you not bless me with your look? Is it fixed ever on Francis?"

Lauds! The silver bells cast by Bartolomeo of Pisa, lately placed in the great bell-tower of the church on the hill, were striking the hour. Francis, Poverty, had vanished. But the chapel was not empty. Dark figures, more phantasmal than the saint had been, were kneeling there; and as the bells died on the still night air, they intoned the Office.

"All nations compassed me round about; but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. . . .

"The voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass. . . .

"Open me the gates of righteousness: that I may go in and give thanks unto the Lord.

> "Do Thou O Christ our slumbers wake,
> Do Thou the chains of darkness break,
> Purge Thou our former sins away,
> And in our souls new light display."

The Office ended, the same voices continued, with a new note of passion, in an improvised Italian litany: —

"Francis, who didst love Poverty to the end,
Pray for us.

Francis, who didst suffer from that Brother who
makes us suffer,
Pray for us.
By the wounds in thy hands and feet and side,
Keep us loyal to the end.
That we have strength naked to bear the naked cross,
Pray for us.
Francis, who didst love well thy son and friend,
Brother Cæsar of Spires,
Help us to set him free.
Francis, who wast pure from earthly lusts,
Grant us faith to love and die."

Pierre touched John's shoulder. It was he who knelt beside his friend. "Come," he whispered; and John, rising in a daze, followed from the chapel into the forest.

IV

CONSPIRACY AND CHOICE

Trees grew scarce around the Portiuncula; the vast assemblies of friars who even in Francis' day had sought that sacred spot, had necessitated some clearing of the woods. Pierre led John swiftly on into deeper glooms, a waning moon making it possible to find their way. They paused in a glade threaded with starlight, where enormous twisted trunks rose visible into overarching blackness. Six figures John counted. All, he noticed, were discalced, a sure sign of their sympathies, for already the laxer brothers were wearing shoes.

The tallest of the group, a man slightly bent as with age, but of very noble bearing, stepped forward. His eyes scrutinized John, who shrank instinctively into shadow.

"Who is this brother?" he asked Pierre, gently, yet, as John sensitively thought, with a touch of questioning rebuke.

"My friend, John of Sanfort, the Englishman, true lover of Francis and poverty," Pierre made eager answer.

The tall man looked John over, not exactly with hostility or even with suspicion, but certainly with doubt. He had, John saw through the shadows, a very lovely, venerable face.

"You yourself are not very well known to us, Brother Pierre," said he in courteous accents; and a voice broke in: —

"Brother Pierre needs no credentials. Is he not Cæsar's friend?"

Another voice from the shadows — very bitter, this: "So was Elias."

"I went with Brother Pierre to the prison," said the friar who had spoken before. "Had you seen Brother Cæsar's welcome of him, Brother Morico, you would not doubt. Dear Brother Bernard, may we not proceed with our talk? For the night wanes."

Pierre, John knew, was quivering with impatience.

"Try me!" he exclaimed. "You are met, I know, to plan concerning Brother Cæsar. If the plan for his release mean danger, death, make me the instrument! If it mean more," he dropped his voice, "if it mean injury to Brother Elias, so much the better."

John detected a slight movement of revolt on the part of two or three of the brothers. Bernard's restraining hand was on Pierre's shoulder. He spoke sternly.

"It is not your zeal I doubt, my son; rather your discretion. Our business to-night is delicate, nor should it involve injury to any man. You know well," he addressed the group, "that as its outcome you may

all be forced to betake you to the forest as I have been this past year. Yet," and again he faced Pierre, "you speak without reserve. Nor have you as yet given us any guaranty for this young brother whom you have brought here."

"Let him speak for himself," said Pierre sulkily. His morose mood, which John knew so well, was upon him.

The group waited. John was silent. He longed to speak, but something — was it reverence? — withheld him. Brother Bernard? Was he indeed in the presence of that honored first companion, that dear friend of Francis?

"Speak! Speak!" urged Pierre, shaking him a little. That perplexing aloofness which had marked his bearing on the journey had disappeared. "Tell them you count the world well lost for poverty. Tell them, as you have told me so often, that only he who is stripped may sing. Tell them you hate those false brothers who insult our Founder and our faith. Tell them that you loathe Brother Elias as the messenger of Satan. Oh, had you seen Brother Cæsar, his pure face furrowed and wan, his hands, that healed me once, transparent like white onyx —"

"Whence springs your excessive love of Cæsar?" interrupted he they called Brother Morico, while John stood in a daze.

Pierre caught his breath. "Have I not said? He healed me. And I believe that once more, were he only free —" As one remembering, he removed his

touch from John, withdrew a few paces. Presently he resumed, more tranquilly but very earnestly.

"John — speak! This is Brother Bernard. Here are Brother Rufino, Brother Sylvester who dispersed the devils at Arezzo, Brother Angelo Tancredi, Brother Morico. These are our Father's chosen intimates. It is as if you spoke to Francis himself."

John heard him, but it was as if the voice came from far away. Another, more inward, held his attention. "A choice to make this night," it was saying. "A choice — a choice!" Had his great moment come?

The beauty of the church on the hill rose before him. It faded, and as if in a dream he saw the face of Brother Aymon when he accepted in Oxford the charge that was laid upon him to denounce his friend.

"A choice to make this night."

He heard himself speaking at last, rather formally, a little hesitant and shy. "I have been sent by Brother Adam Marsh to accompany Brother Aymon and the delegation from the English chapter. You know, brothers, what mission this delegation bears."

"We know, and we approve. But we fear compromise." The bitter voice of Morico was speaking. "You English are always for compromise. You are cold as your skies. Nor have you personal experience of the harm this man has wrought."

Murmurs of assent arose. "I have heard," said a lank elderly brother who had not yet spoken, "that the English are chiefly concerned about certain visitors to their convents, and that Brother Aymon resents Brother

Elias' policy of keeping the offices of our Order in lay hands. Now in that one point I think Elias has done well. Priest though I am, I glory in subordination to laymen, ever since a day you and I remember well, Brother Bernard." Here he surprised John by chuckling deeply. "Also, the idea of visitors does not disturb me. But the Bombarone seeks to quicken again in your soul and mine that craving greed from which Christ and Francis set me free." He smote his breast with a gesture of contrition.

Brother Morico was speaking, rather impatiently. "We are not here to discuss the sins of the Bombarone, Brother Sylvester. We know them too well. Listen, Brother, — John, is it not? — in my judgment, you should swear before you hear our counsels that you will not be content till the Order of Francis spew Elias forth, accursed, branding him traitor, as was Iscariot."

A deep sigh broke from Brother Bernard. Another friar, slender he and erect, shrouded his head in his hood and sobbed aloud. But no one uttered protest. It was left for John to say, very timidly: "Would it be the will of Francis that I take such oath?"

He had asked his question of Bernard; and the old friar made over him the sign of blessing.

"You have no right to demand such an oath, Brother Morico," said Bernard tremulously. "Have you forgotten that our Father bade us always not to judge? Have you forgotten his love for Brother Elias?"

"I have not forgotten whom our Father sought to bless on his deathbed — nor who stole the blessing,"

growled Morico. And again there was a murmur of agreement. The pause was broken by Pierre. John understood that it was Pierre's audacity which had brought to a focus the anger and resolve of these peace-loving souls.

"John!" he urged — to be met by sorrowful silence. Then, turning to the group: "Let me tell you what he never will tell, what I learned from our comrades on the way. In his own land my friend was noble; he was rich; all lay before him. And he renounced all for love of Holy Poverty, like you, Brother Bernard, and like Brother Rufino and Brother Angelo, who were noble, as all the Order knows. And though a dumb devil possesses him, I dare aver that Poverty loves him with a special love. Have I not traveled with him? Have I not seen him sing most merrily when he is most hungry, work most gayly at hardest tasks, and spend himself in love and comradeship toward the meanest? I am of the people, I. My people are weavers for generations past. Well we know the manners of noblemen. Never should I have guessed that this youth is heir to a noble name and great possessions. He is noble, yes — but of the courts of Heaven. He —"

John, who had been restlessly trying to check this outburst, succeeded now by raising his voice somewhat above an aristocratic key.

"Brother Bernard! Make him stop!" he almost shouted. "Rank! Wealth!" He appealed to the group, with outstretched hands. "Forgive Pierre,

for he has put me to shame. To renounce such dung — what is that? Not merit, but pure joy. Is there any one of us who fails to understand this? Brother Bernard, you know as well as I what nonsense Pierre is talking." He ended laughing, exasperated and contemptuous.

"The wisdom of this world," assented Bernard, laughing too. Then speaking to the others, who were smiling, — all but Morico, — "Brother John is of our family. You may see well that he will not betray us." All the heads nodded, except Brother Morico's, and loving looks were bent on John; for Brother Bernard carried authority in this group.

"Ay, 'tis a winning youth," Morico murmured, "but he has not proclaimed himself against Elias."

True, John had done nothing of the sort. But he was passing through a swift and sharp experience. Living, not thinking, makes our choices for us. Here, in presence of these dear and trusted friends of the Poverello, whom he had so hungered to see, in presence above all of Bernard the beloved, no question was possible. He discovered his decision. He did not invent it.

But he did not have to speak at once, or formally to range himself on any side, for, since Bernard accepted him, the group had forgotten his presence. They had drawn close together, and were conversing rapidly and softly, in running, many-voweled Italian. John, not venturing to draw near, and still slow in catching the foreign speech, could follow little. Now and then

a phrase flashed out, indignant, grief-stricken. Again and again recurred the name of Cæsar. Bernard he understood best, from the clear beauty of his enunciation, for Bernard's speech was the speech of the aristocrat. And he, it seemed, was pleading earnestly the great need of the Order that Brother Cæsar be at liberty. Brother Leo, it seemed, was out of reach. Brother Giles, though near at hand in Perugia, had withdrawn from active concerns. John felt that Brother Bernard was wistfully aware that his own generation was passing off the stage, and that he was anxiously solicitous for others to continue a great tradition. Who should lead the men to come in the thorny, blossoming way of Lady Poverty?

Bernard, however, so far as John could understand, had no practical proposal to bring forward. Nor had anyone else, till at last, after long confused talk, Pierre's familiar accents fell distinctly on John's ear.

"Has never a prison been broken? Has never a prisoner escaped, by the help of his friends?"

A troubled stir agitated the group.

Rapidly, ardently, Pierre unfolded a plan, John losing most of the details: an open gate — a little walk outside the prison walls — a sudden rescue.

The tall slender brother who had been taking no share in the talk now spoke, raising a face that seemed to belong to the starlight, so pure it was and sad.

"It were a holy deed to set our Brother Cæsar free." His voice was exquisitely modulated, like that of Bernard, but higher in pitch.

"Yes, Brother Rufino! And doubly holy, for thereby the power of Elias would be effectively defied," said Brother Morico eagerly.

Rufino nodded slowly. "We recognize no authority save that of Brother Bernard," said he, and a general murmur of assent arose.

"But to break a prison," hesitated Brother Sylvester, "is it not to break the law? When were the sons of Francis lawbreakers?"

A moment's meditative pause; then Rufino spoke again. "Do you not remember," he mused, "how Brother Francis always set caged creatures free?"

This seemed to be the final argument.

"Francis told Brother Cæsar, who told me," contributed Pierre, "that if the brothers were faithless to the rule, he was authorized to run away alone, or with companions, the better to observe it. Is not that just what we shall help him to do?"

Convinced on the main issue, the brothers passed to considering ways and means more closely. The name of the jailer, Brother John de Laudibus, reached the ears of English John. Some thought that he was secretly a friend to Cæsar; others shook their heads.

"A lover of larks cannot love cages," suggested someone.

"All the same," this was Sylvester, "John de Laudibus never betrayed a trust."

"He betrays the trust reposed in him by Francis if he supports the policy of Elias," said Brother Angelo

Tancredi with spirit. "How is it possible for him to do so?"

Brother Sylvester raised his hands sadly. "Ask Brother Illuminato. Was he not one of us from the first? And now he is up there, serving in Assisi as Brother Elias' secretary!"

"John de Laudibus will have to be restrained," Brother Morico was the speaker. "Unless you succeed in that, Brother Cæsar will never escape."

"Who ever restrained John de Laudibus? He has the strength of four," sighed Sylvester with a shrug.

"No, not of more than two. And here is Brother Angelo, who certainly has the strength of more than one," Morico countered. "This is a case where a little use of force is certainly justified. As some of you know, I wear a suit of mail under my habit."

Bernard moved uneasily, and several friars shook their heads.

"I could not cope with Brother John de Laudibus," said Angelo. A finely built brother he was, of open countenance. "If he resists, I might be betrayed into conduct unbecoming a friar. I wear no suit of mail, but you know I was a soldier once."

"After all, you managed those robbers Francis entrusted to you on Monte Casale without unbecoming conduct," said Brother Sylvester, and subdued laughter ran through the group. But Rufino was speaking gravely. "Angelo mine, it is not wrong for a friar to think more of his friend's freedom than of the correctness of his conduct," said he.

Pierre was pushing John forward into the spot of moonlight. "What is the matter with Brother John?" he was saying. "Look at him! Would you not know that he was bred to arms?" And to John he whispered, "So if you help them now, you can scatter all their doubts of you."

> (Old John, still listening to his past, kneeling tremulous within his prison cell, heard that whisper very distinctly.)

John reached out his hands in eager offering. "Will you accept my aid, Brothers?" he cried, and caught a smile of assent in Morico's eyes, and, he thought, in Rufino's, in Angelo's. Later might come the time to mourn the intricacy of decisions, their inexorable swiftness at the end. For the moment, his one absorbing wish was to win his place among these honored ones.

Lost as he was in emotion, the talk drifted away from him. When he was once more within its current, Brother Bernard was speaking.

"I have, most of you know, built myself a little refuge on the slope of Monte Saphro, deep hidden in the woods. If you succeed in this evasion, I will guide Brother Cæsar thither."

The first weird hint of dawn was in the sky, and phantasmal light was penetrating the trees when the group dispersed. But it was still dark within the Portiuncula. John found his way back there alone, and knelt once more within the dear sanctuary of Saint

Francis. And in what utter peace — for here reality was waiting him. Those cowled forms, that hushed, excited talk in the forest, seemed dreams of the night. Dream or fact, they had decided his programme. Father Aymon's will was accomplished. The prescribed choice was made.

Questions remained unsolved. He knew no more than before the right limits of renunciation, the will of Lady Poverty toward beauty, toward learning, or for that matter, toward corporate possession. Hardly he knew whether to flee the world or to embrace it. But as he knew his goal, he knew his guides; and what more is needed by a poor pilgrim? Those blessed ones, the first companions of Francis, they to whom his yearning affections had these many months been set, had received him into their company. He abandoned himself in bliss of humility to the glad sense that he was one of them.

He prayed that he might be worthy of them on the morrow. Where they led, should he fear to pursue? What they believed and approved, should he challenge, should he doubt?

V

THE DEATH OF BROTHER CÆSAR

John was confirmed in his decision the next morning, and again in a personal and illogical manner.

Along the lovely road leading from Assisi to Spello came a small, well-conditioned friar of dry and haughty countenance, riding a beautiful white palfrey. Portly brothers and comfortable John had seen before. Plenty such were by this time tramping the ways of Europe, unabashed men, fond of life's good things, often jolly and attractive, hail fellow well met with everyone, men savoring to the full the gay irresponsibility of the friar's life, and obviously no intimates of Lady Poverty. But a friar like this he had never beheld till now. Exquisite the trappings of the palfrey, finest weave the cloth of the habit. The rather heavy face was furrowed with lines suggesting autocratic authority. Young pages in bright livery trotted beside him. He bore himself, as he paced on, with frank insolence, while the people in the street looked at him somewhat askance.

As the great church on the hill came into sight, his eyes gleamed. He paused, and reined in his palfrey as if to gloat on its glories. And from the church, across the piazza, streamed an obsequious group of friars to welcome him. Brother Elias had come to town; and if anything were needed to clinch John's assurance of the party to which he did not belong, it would have been the sight of him.

That day, Aymon was withdrawn into a privacy concerning which speculation was rife. Elias too was not in the public eye; conference was conceivably going on between these two. The little group from England whispered together with troubled mind, nor was any one among them more troubled than young Brother John. Always he saw Aymon's face when in Oxford the charge to challenge and denounce his friend had been laid on him. That odd antipathy with which Aymon had inspired John had not wholly passed away. Still he felt a lack of human sympathy, an assumption of ecclesiastical authority, about that distinguished leader. But his distaste had become blended with understanding and respect.

His imagination dwelt this morning on a hundred phases of the probable talk between the two men. Brother Elias would at some points get the best of it — oh, he was clever, Elias! A glimpse had sufficed to show that. He would fling in Brother Aymon's teeth the departure from Francis' will in the matter of learning; would perhaps pose as Francis' true follower in regard to that not unimportant question, sacerdotal

or lay leadership in the Order. Yet Aymon, for all his insignificant figure, would be able, John thought, to hold his own. After all, how little men's opinions mattered — how greatly their spirit! That Brother Aymon was according to his lights truly of Saint Francis' spirit, John in spite of his distaste had never questioned. Well — he could brood over these things no longer; for the late morning brought to the fore an issue more poignant.

It was at noon that Brother Cæsar of Spires was usually taken out for a brief airing. And at this hour John found himself, according to agreement, within an archway giving on a little street opposite the prison. Monte Subasio rose in wide and tranquil slopes behind him; below, down the steep street, lay glimpses of the plain. Others — Sylvester, Morico — were with him in the shelter of the arch; the rest of the group of the night before were, he knew, not far off. And within the archway a door stood ajar. If all went well, Cæsar should be spirited through that door, out at the back of the house, off to the hills.

A breathless time of waiting — and two figures, habited both in the friar's garb, issued from the gate of what he judged to be the prison.

The one, tall, burly, moving with arrogant, swinging stride, was evidently John de Laudibus. Infinitely touching that other figure, stooped and wavering. As he advanced tremulously, John saw what he was never to forget. Never before had he confronted the face of a man who had known supreme suffering. Yet

there was nothing strange to him in these eyes, gazing beyond the world, this dignity blended with pain. For the face of Brother Cæsar was as the face of the great Byzantine Christs with twisted limbs and features contorted in agony, before which John had knelt to adore, by many a wayside shrine. A long scar traversed the left cheek. And the compassion which now swept over John was almost adoring, so keen a reverence did Cæsar's face inspire.

Suddenly gray frocks surrounded those two friars — crowded away the giant form of John de Laudibus. A rescue, a rescue! Brother Rufino, Brother Angelo — John thought he had a glimpse of Bernard. The scene was strange to him, was like a dream. But into that dream he flung himself, was in the heart of the group, panting, pushing. The jailer, taken aback, threw up his hands in amaze. Pierre's face flashed on John — Pierre had his arms round Cæsar, was pressing him swiftly toward the archway. A rescue, a rescue!

Not yet. With a roar of rage, John de Laudibus shook off the detaining friars, lifted his gigantic arm, and laid about him. And then was seen a sad spectacle, and even in that tragic moment John laughed, for men running away are always absurd. Particularly comical was the gesture of Morico, running for all he was worth, despite his vaunted suit of mail. But not all fled. The jailer had flung himself on Cæsar, and on Pierre, who tried in vain to beat him off with gestures feeble and wild. Rufino, Angelo, John himself, were on the assailant — and now Brother John, the young Lord

of Sanfort, lost all sense of being in a dream and forgot that he was a friar.

> (In the circle of light on a prison wall, that scene of long ago shone sharp and hideous before aged eyes.)

Brother Rufino was overcome, was down; and a mighty buffet knocked to one side Brother Angelo, struggling with desperate valor. John de Laudibus seized the arms which Pierre had cast around Cæsar; John the Englishman heard the snapping of his friend's bones. Cæsar, who should have fled at this juncture, was bent, his face illumined with solicitude, above the fainting Pierre. Now John's own turn had come. But it was the Lord of Sanfort, not the friar, who closed with John de Laudibus.

And — oh, miracle! — he had him at his mercy. Youth was on his side, and a fall he had learned long ago stood him in good stead. Swaying moments, while a sense of health and power raced through his veins, and a new glee possessed him; a quick tense movement; the jailer, tripped up, fell, a sprawling bulk.

"Brother Cæsar! The archway! Flee!" cried John. But Cæsar, bending over Pierre's arm and binding it with a strip torn from his tunic, made as if he had not heard. John de Laudibus was rallying, heaving angry groans, rising, huge and irate. The street now was full of townsfolk, enjoying the fracas. One had pressed close to the young Englishman.

What was this — a sword in John's grasp? And feeling most natural there! As the jailer sprang on Cæsar, John plunged the sword in his shoulder, withdrew it, aimed it at his side.

It was Cæsar's voice, never heard before, never with fleshly ear to be heard again, which called with accents as from Heaven: "Son! Remember your vows! By holy obedience, refrain! Put up your sword!" They were Cæsar's eyes that flashed command. And John the friar, gazing aghast at the blood which gushed from the jailer's shoulder, dropped his sword, bowed his head, and crossed his arms.

John de Laudibus, maddened, bleeding, rushed anew on his unresisting prisoner, tore up with his uninjured arm a post that stood in the way, struck Cæsar a mighty blow that fell dull on neck and head. The victim's limbs grew limp, the head dropped strangely, horribly — Brother Rufino, once more close at hand, cried devoutly: "Lord, receive his soul!" Pierre, his bandaged arm hanging inert, sprang toward Cæsar. The jailer towered wrathful and triumphant, with wide-grinning mouth and hostile eyes.

"Dead!" shrieked Pierre. Turning to John with a high quavering voice unlike his own, he cried, "You might have saved him!"

"I could but obey him," sobbed John.

There was awed silence. The friars who had fled were returned.

"Pierre," whispered John, appealing, looking into his friend's accusing eyes, "it was not Cæsar only I

obeyed. It was — this." And he lifted his cord to his lips.

Pierre's face blazed. He seized the cord from his own habit, flung it away, tore the habit off, and rushed naked into the open portal. None sought to detain him; rather men scattered, shuddering, to let him pass. John started to follow. But a tall figure, emerging from the shadows, barred the way. It was old Brother Bernard.

"Follow not!" He spoke with authority. "Seek solitude for prayer. It is through prayer that you must help your friend at this moment, not —" the tone seemed charged with some special meaning — "not through the deeds of sinful flesh." Bernard, in the midst of all this agitation, stood very calm, erect in a sad dignity.

John paused, and the emotions of the last few moments ebbed and quieted as a full tide draws noiseless to the deep. A crowd had gathered around the body of Cæsar; its sympathy was evidently with the friars. Sobs were heard, and loud and angry words. But now Bernard came close, making over the body the sign of the cross; the crowd, recognizing him with deep respect, hushed its clamor. At a gesture from him the friars began to chant: —

"Requiem æternam. . . .
Lux perpetua. . . .
A porta inferi
Erue Domine animam suam."

Presently, the grave notes lessening with distance, the sad procession which bore the body disappeared.

The crowd followed, and the street was once more vacant in the noonday. Brother Bernard turned to John.

The jailer had vanished, but a little dark pool of his blood lay on the ground. John was gazing at it, spell-bound.

At the gentle touch of Bernard's hand, he roused and looked into the pitying face, and his distressed eyes were those of a young child.

"Father, I shed blood!" he whispered.

Morico, very grim, had returned. "Yes — you shed blood," said he. "And to no purpose, since you did not shed a little more."

For the first time, anger lit the face of Bernard.

"To what purpose do you hurt your brother?" said he sternly. "Was it from horror of bloodshed that you escaped, yourself, from the fray? Go and pray by Cæsar's body!"

"But he is right," mourned John, reaching out his hands to Bernard. "What is more or less? Since I was so to sin, I would I had saved Brother Cæsar. The sword was welcome to my hand. Father, I am in darkness. *Mea culpa, mea culpa!* Shame smothers me! But I do not know whether I repent the thrust of the sword or the failure to thrust it again. Jesu, mercy!" And again he lifted to Bernard the distressed eyes of a child. He had revealed his heart simply, as never to mortal man before. "So foolish was I and ignorant! I was even as a beast before Thee!" cried John, and beat upon his breast.

Bernard's regard grew very tender.

"No beast, little brother," said he, "but a soul tried as Christ's own are tried. So are we all in darkness. Often we know not our virtues from our sins. Perhaps what we count as sins are sometimes reckoned to us above as virtues." He had slipped into meditation. "Nor is it given us to know much." He drew a crucifix from his bosom. "Look on the Sinless One and take comfort. There is no other comfort for the sons of men," sighed he.

John pressed the crucifix to his lips. There was an instant of intense silence. Then Bernard resumed, in his tones of authority: —

"Sons, think not of your sins, for there is work to do. There are three concerned in what has passed who need your earnest prayers. And one is Brother Cæsar the beloved, for whose soul you and the whole Order shall intercede, that his pains in purgatory may be short. And one is the jailer, Brother John de Laudibus, the man who did him to death. And the third is Brother Elias."

"I will not pray for Brother Elias," muttered Morico sullenly.

"Brother Cæsar is praying for him now," said John.

He spoke tranquilly, with an inward voice differing from his usual tones. The others looked at him, startled. Angelo had moved up the hill, with the bier; silence filled the street. Bernard, with Rufino and Morico, were now present.

John had moved a few feet into the glare of the midday. His head was thrown back, immobile, at a strange angle. His eyes, fixed unblinking on the blazing light of the zenith, caught that light as in a mirror. Bernard and Rufino instantly recognized his condition.

"Lord! Lay not this sin to the charge of Brother Elias!" said John monotonously, with the manner as of one echoing something overheard. And again there was silence.

"That is the voice of Brother Cæsar," murmured Brother Morico, very low.

Presently John's head drooped. His eyes, losing their rigidity, sought once more the eyes of Bernard and Rufino. "You heard, dear brothers?" he asked in his natural voice, very quietly. "You heard? You saw?"

Brother Bernard shook his head. "It is for you, my dearest son, to tell us what is beyond the light of day," he said.

"Did Brother Cæsar look on you, dear brother? Does he forgive us all?" asked Brother Rufino humbly.

John made a gesture of negation. He was smiling now, boyish and released.

"I do not think he forgives; I think he thanks us — not for trying to save him, but for failing," he replied. "But he is not yet thinking much about us. I could not see that Face from which his face caught light, but him I saw. He is no longer crucified; he is at peace; his look is as the look of the Lord arisen. I think, though I am not sure, that he is already with Saint

Francis. And great will be his help to us, my brothers dear, greater far than if we had succeeded in rescuing his earthly life, as we strive to hold our Order true.

"Father," he continued, speaking to Bernard, "why do you linger here on the public street? Withdraw, I pray you, and at once, to your refuge in the woods." It did not occur to any present that this tone of command came strangely from one so young, so unknown, and a short time ago so timid.

"He is right," said Rufino, starting as if called back from high places. "You are the one of us in most danger. Go, Bernard!"

"Go! Go! Assisi is a-buzz!" called Morico. He was already himself running toward the portal. "Look back! Brother Elias' men come up the street!" and he disappeared into safety. But old Bernard lingered.

"Is all well with you, John, my son?" asked he solicitously.

And John answered, "All will not be well, if you are captured."

"Come with me," said Brother Bernard. "Months must pass before I can venture again into Assisi. It will be best if you too are not seen here for a while."

John signed glad acceptance. As the three hastened, not too quickly, toward the gate leading eastward, Rufino said: "I shall strike across presently to my hermitage at the Carceri. And this time," he smiled, "I do not think Francis would mind my running there. Or Sister Clare. Even if she told Francis, as he told me,

to preach rather than to withdraw from the world, she knows there is a time for all things.

"Dear Brother John," he added, "our youth is renewed in you. Christ and Francis have sent you to us."

VI

WITH BROTHER BERNARD

The three friars swung out from the town into the woods — down — up, with a view presently of Assisi crowned by the old castle, lying across from them. Rufino paused.

"I swerve here to the right," said he. "God be with you, brothers both."

"It may be as well for you to stay at the Carceri, not too far from Assisi," said Brother Bernard — a little mischievously, John thought. "Many brothers will privately seek comfort from you after this day's doings."

Rufino sighed.

"Brother," ventured John, "You will be in touch with Assisi? Could you perhaps get word to Brother Aymon that I have gone with Brother Bernard?"

Rufino made a wry face.

"Forgive me," stammered John hastily. "I was careless. Do I ask you to take a risk?"

"Brother Rufino of the Scifi is not timid," said Brother Bernard dryly, "nor need there be any risk. Your request is proper. Rufino, I must not spirit

away this young man without notifying Brother Aymon, who is in charge of him. You must do yourself the violence" — and he laughed — "to go among your fellows, perhaps even to accost this English brother whom I do not think you know, and give him this message. And tell Brother Aymon that if he needs young Brother John of Sanfort, he has only to let me know at Nocera or Saphro. It will be well for Brother Aymon to be informed of my whereabouts."

Rufino was smiling too. "Yes, brother," he agreed. "Francis speaks through you, I know." And he vanished into the ravine.

"Brother Aymon will never in the world need me," said John a little mournfully. "It was always hard for him to remember that I existed." But Bernard was not attending.

"Rufino is so shy," he sighed. "He shrinks absurdly from converse with men. But that was not the way of Francis. Rufino informed us once that he had been told by an angel that Francis had misled him, and that the angel bade him withdraw completely into the life contemplative. And Francis led several of us up to the Carceri, where Rufino was living in prayer, and we all really saw that angel; its wings were resplendent. But Francis made the sign of the cross — and, behold! It was a foul fiend, and vanished with a stench and great uproar. Rufino was put to shame. Since then he never leads the recluse life for long at a time; but he may very properly lead it for a while now, and you and I too, my new little brother."

Up and up, higher than he had ever been before, John climbed with Brother Bernard, threading long trails — sheep tracks often — that followed the rise and fall of the softly curving Apennines to the east of Assisi. The wide moors of his native Cornwall had been dear to his boyhood, but mountains, except as seen at a distance, were new to him. He had, without knowing it, been homesick for space, and he felt a fresh harmony between outward and inward, as civilization was left behind. Mostly they were in the woodlands, but sometimes they came out on the crest of some long ridge whence the broad plains of Umbria swept into opaline distance, while the winding bed of the Tescio gleamed in the nearer distance with its golden sands. The plain was enringed with mountains, less substantial in their amethystine translucence than the blue depths of sky in which they rested.

"This is our cloister, Lady Poverty," smiled Brother Bernard, waving toward the horizon, as they first paused on such a crest.

"Poor Brother Elias!" mused John, "in that arcaded building at Assisi! It is he who is in prison."

Brother Bernard spoke seldom, and that briefly, as they tramped along; nor was John much aware of human fellowship. How different this was from the journey from Paris! Then, too, he had known the joy of the open, even the strange peace of the shelterless. But Pierre was beside him, and his attention was not wholly on the way.

Pierre! John dared not think of him — not yet.

Let the present absorb him. And indeed nothing else was possible.

In those former days the company had walked on respectable man-made roads. Now, merely to follow the trail needed alert attention. There was little to suggest humanity in these dense woods. The upward spring of the body was an invigorating miracle. Brother Rabbit accompanied them, very much in the plural number; Brother Deer scurried away now and then. Brother Wolf did not show himself, but the birds were very gay. Their songs had notes John never had heard in England. As by and by their vesper chorus rose to greet the westering light, barriers between sense and spirit seemed to melt.

Vespers were over now, and even the little sleepy chirrupings ceased after a while. It grew more and more dusky; they were far from human habitation. The air had become sharp and pure, such air as John had never breathed; snow lay heavy in patches. And now Bernard's elastic footsteps lagged uncertainly; they were tangled in a thicket.

"Son, we may have to spend the night in the open," said he apologetically. "The dusk has bewildered me."

"So long as I am with you, Father —" John answered cheerfully.

A crash in the bushes. Would Brother Wolf emerge? No, it was a woodcutter, a stocky little man with vigorous stride. He stood beside them, grinning.

"Ah ha, Benito!" exclaimed Brother Bernard, with

an accent of relief. "Here you are, as usual when I am in need."

"The good Lord has given you into my charge, Father," returned Benito in rough speech which John could hardly understand. He led the way with assured step, and presently they were in more open land, where, looking across and down to another ridge below, they saw lights twinkling.

"Nocera!" said Brother Bernard. "We go on farther, toward Camerino, which lies beyond that upper range." Turning to one side, they pushed through the woods once more, Benito leading. Night fell before they came in a cleared glade to a little brown hut that seemed as natural a growth of the soil as a fungus. "One moment, Father," said Benito; and presently there was a fire, warm and welcoming, and a delicious supper of chestnut bread and cheese, with eggs baked in the ashes.

"Benito is my mother," laughed Bernard. "Brother Francis, you know, sent us into solitude two by two. And one was to be the mother, providing the food, that the other might spend his time in prayer. But I have no permanent brother living with me, and this good Benito takes his place."

"Oh, may I not be mother?" pleaded John, and Bernard nodded. "Also," said he, "you may help Benito with his woodcutting. For there is much to do, and his children are too small to help him."

Tranquil the days that followed. It was the real recluse life that John was leading, but a life of whole-

some labor too. Woodcutting was a contemplative occupation, and Benito and he communicated perforce by smiles only. Brother Bernard spoke to him hardly more than Benito. And through the silence, and through occasional hints at that past so sacred to Bernard, John entered into most intimate union with the little band that had been with Francis.

To anyone used to the winters of northern Cornwall, an Umbrian February might seem mild. Yet it snowed now and then among the hills, and John, wandering at will through these high solitudes, watched the descending flakes in their noiseless fall with a sense of kinship. As snow crystallizes when there is no agitation in the surrounding air, so in this deep quietude the various forces which had shaken his spirit since his novitiate began appeared to shape themselves into harmony. Conscious volition was asleep in him, all struggle in abeyance. He roamed through the mountain woods, drawn much to the upper slopes where faint trails meandered among stunted bushes which were too small to conceal the depths below — mighty chasms that opened here and there toward distances dull or shimmering. And the even intake of the scentless air, so different from the fragrant forest, seemed to suffice him as an assertion of existence.

While, on the verge of some sharp-dropping crag, he sat motionless by the hour in the pale February sun, love for mother earth was his controlling emotion. It saturated his being. His senses, in this wholesome life, became constantly more acute. The delicate move-

ment of vapors, drifting among the fine lacework formed by twigs and branches, the hint of red or dusky blue in the berries and stalks of the bushes, the scuttling footfalls of tiny creatures, gave him intense joy. The horizon, ever changing, ever steadfast, now clear, now misty within the embracing sky, was Love itself made manifest.

And perversely his very sense of well-being forced him into question. For John was of those unlucky natures never quite surrendered to their own instincts.

"Father, I am troubled," he said to Bernard one night, as the two sat by their smouldering fire while dank fogs drooped protectingly around the hut.

"I had hoped that your troubles were fading," said Bernard, serenely kind.

"I suppose," John was amused at himself, yet spoke half seriously, "I suppose I am troubled because I do not feel troubled any longer."

Brother Bernard made no response to this cryptic statement. He sat, his large hands with their aristocratic fingers resting lightly on his knees, his noble old face peaceful in the firelight. John continued, more and more in earnest: —

"The wisest of my brothers have spoken much to me of Nothingness, of Naughting. I have not understood very well, but I have felt them wise. Have we not given up the world for God? I too thought that I had begun to love Lady Poverty a little. But, Father Bernard, I do also love the earth so much! I sit on the hill, and love cherishes me from the horizon and brings

messages from every little footfall stirring among dry leaves. When sense is laid asleep, beauty is with me all the same. And Father, the taste of these herbs that Benito brings us for our meals is so delicious that I fear I am a glutton."

"Is that why you are addicted, as I have noticed, to eating them raw?" asked Bernard. He had been making wee gleeful noises as John talked. "I too like pleasant food," he added lightly; "some of the brothers have been shocked that I did not fast more. Now Brother Elias is strong on fasting."

"For himself? Or for others?" queried John. Brother Bernard raised his eyebrows.

"I regret that I mentioned Elias. But you, John, need not be afraid of accepting with gratitude what the good Lord provides. And I recommend for your stomach's sake the kind offices of Brother Fire."

John was still a trifle diverted from his main issue. "I have heard how you burst in on Brother Elias one day, saying that you would share his good things," he smiled.

"Oh that was a fine dinner! Better than I care for, to tell the truth," returned Bernard.

"But Father," resumed the disciple, "I wait your answer. How shall I, who love the earth so well, attain to Naughting?"

Bernard was not much given to analysis. "I know what you mean," he mused. "Never, when I lived a comfortable burgher life down in Assisi, did warmth delight me as it does to-night."

"It is not fair," John persisted whimsically. "The more we renounce the more we possess. The corrupt earth! Why must I love it so?"

Brother Bernard was now quite serious. "Never let us fear love, my son," said he earnestly.

John was a little troubled. "The doctors would call that perilous doctrine, Father."

Bernard shook his head. "I am not very conversant with the doctors, nor do I believe Francis cared much for them. I am a plain burgher. I have never yet found my truth by thinking about it. But I know real love cannot mislead. Tell me, when you love the horizon, do you desire to own it?"

"No. It owns me!" cried John.

"One day," resumed Bernard after a pause, "you shall visit Brother Giles on Monte Ripido. He will expound to you the mystery of the Three Heavens; it is for that, I think, your soul is reaching. Giles understands these mysteries, which are beyond my simpleness."

John was no longer heeding him — he was gazing rapt into the fire.

"*Nudus nudam crucem ferar*," he murmured. "Brother Thomas taught me those words. I thought I understood them. Where is my cross?"

The flames, as he gazed, were filled with faces, evoked by memory: the face of Brother Cæsar in his agony; the faces, hunger-pinched and squalid, familiar to him in the slums of Exeter; the diseased face, worm-eaten, loathsome, which a year ago that Christmastide

had forced him from the comforts of his hall into the Cornish forest. And as he looked, this face changed subtly into the face of Pierre. Ah, the loving, seeking eyes!

"Jesu, mercy! Mercy on all who suffer!" It was in his inward voice that he said these words.

The older man watched him in the firelight, suspecting that he was in the spirit. When John was once more cognizant of him, he spoke affectionately.

"My son, you shall see Brother Giles. I perceive that you and he will have much to say to each other, either in words or by silence. And you shall do more. Some day you shall know our holiest place. You shall visit La Verna."

John looked up, very still. "Thank you, my father," he said almost inaudibly. "I am not ready yet. It was told me once that the seraph with whom my soul holds converse was not yet crucified."

Sunrise the next morning found him higher than he had been before, on a mountain summit. He looked over receding waves of shadowy Apennines toward that unseen plain where lay Assisi. Below him lay the green waters of the Topino. As Brother Sun, slow and majestical, soared into the heavens and touched the wide-reaching heights above the mists to glory, his adoring feelings sought for words. Italian words they must be — but oh! how halting and rough they came, echoes of a music his dull English ears and lips could not quite catch! His morning meditation, to be shared one day with many who never knew to whom

it had first been given! For the Lauds of the friars belonged not to one but to all, and the final singer, not the first, was the one, if any, to be gratefully remembered.

"O Love, why hast Thou thus besieged my castle?
Infatuate, Thou wilt not let me go.

I see that in five quarters I 'm besieged,
Hearing and touch and sight and taste and smell.
I cannot hide; if I come out, I 'm captured.

If I come out by sight, Love 's all I see;
In every form, in every hue, it 's painted.
It shows me plain that I must shelter Thee.

If I come out by sound, to find my rest,
Hearing and what it means speaks, Lord, of Thee,
So I cannot escape. All heard is Love.

If I come out by taste, all savor names Thee,
Love, Love Divine, Love thirsting evermore!
Love 's caught me on its hook; it holds me fast.

If I come by that gate which is called fragrance,
I find Thee breathing sweet in every creature.
Wounded I turn, Thou capturest me in perfume.

And if I come out by the gate of touch,
I find Thee close embound with every creature.
O Love, I must be mad to flee from Thee!"

John's passion was rising. He covered his eyes with his hands.

"Love, I go fleeing, not to yield my heart.
I see Thou wilt transform me into love,
So that I am no more — am lost in loving."

And now the faces he had seen the night before in the fire rose pitifully before him.

"If I see any man weak, sick, or tempted,
I am transformed in him, become his pain.
Love limitless, when hast Thou done with loving?"

He looked out once more. Rising mists had hidden the heights. The world was blotted out, all but one gulf of gloom beneath his feet. He caught his breath, prostrated himself with outspread arms.

"Bring me to my dead Christ! Draw me from sea to shore!
There let me anguish, seeing Him so wounded.
Why dost Thou let Him die? Through will to heal me!"

"Dear Father Bernard," he said a little later in the day, "I grieve. But I must leave you."

"Yes. I have seen that you would soon say that to me," returned Bernard a little sadly. His manner toward the boy had of late held a touch almost of reverence. "And whither shall you go?"

"You know, I think," John answered. "I go to seek Pierre."

A shocked look sprang into Bernard's eyes. "Not that, son of my heart! Not that!" he cried.

John looked at him, surprised. "But, Father — why? I too — that day of terror and of glory — I thought he meant an eternal farewell. I dared not follow then. My soul has been a heaving sea. You and the hills have calmed those waters. But now, why would you hold me? Is it because he flung our habit away? Indeed, indeed, I can assure you, Pierre is still a friar in his soul. He was enraged by my failure to save Cæsar. I think Pierre is ill. There

is much I do not understand. But he wants me now. He is calling me."

"John," said Brother Bernard abruptly, "did you see Pierre's body as he fled from us?"

"No. Only a flash, very white."

Brother Bernard was silent.

"It is joy that he calls me, Father," John went on, "for during the long, later days of our journey he had avoided me. He would walk alone, he would never let me draw near, he, with whom in purest love I had spent my nights, my days — he whom I had comforted when his dreams were terrible, whom I had lifted when he stumbled. For he was very weak. I perceive, looking back, that he was suffering from almost the moment we left Paris."

"You say that he avoided you?"

"I angered him so often," sighed John, "and he is swift to anger, Pierre."

"That was not the reason." Bernard spoke gravely. "Your friend must be of a fine nature. It was right that you should not be with him, and he knew it." After a little hesitation he went on: —

"You are correct in judging Pierre to be ill. There are those whose duty it is to care for such as he. Where he may be I do not know, but I doubt if you can find him. God forgive me! I hope you may not."

"I hear him calling me," John repeated simply, "and I shall find him. When, where, I do not know."

Brother Bernard threw out his hands in distress.

"If Brother Francis called you, would you not go, Father?"

"Wait at least over the morrow," said Bernard, "for Benito has brought me word up from Nocera that three of our brothers are on their way here. They will have news for us. They might even have some knowledge of Pierre's whereabouts."

VII

A TALK ON THE HEIGHTS

VERY early the next morning the three guests appeared, with Benito as guide. They had spent the night at Saphro, a hamlet not far away, and must have started in the dusk of dawn, Brother Sylvester, mopping his elderly forehead despite the chill, Brother Angelo Tancredi, fresh and handsome as ever and quite at home in the rough lands, and, to John's surprised delight, Brother Thomas of Exeter. His gaunt face was sardonic still, but he looked more at peace than in England, and at least five years younger.

"There were messages to be sent to Brother Aymon; I left Oxford a week after you," he began to explain. "But hush — later!" For Brother Bernard was speaking.

"Have you broken your fast, brothers?" he asked. And Sylvester shook his head.

"Did I not know that you would want me to celebrate mass for you?" He panted. "Eh! What a climb!"

"Dear brother, thank you," said Bernard with tender gravity. "You understood our only lack in these wild parts."

Sylvester looked around, shivering.

"Rather different this from your well-built house in Assisi, Bernard," he remarked, "or even from a comfortable convent with other human beings. But I know that you are content."

"See! An altar and an altar cloth!" said Bernard, leading him to a flat-topped bowlder covered with fine moss, at the edge of the clearing. "Was it not clearly meant that the Holy Sacrifice should be offered here?"

And presently the little group, including Benito, kneeling under the open sky, received the Holy Bread, and rose fortified and glad.

"I did not know how great my need, until it had been met," John confided to Angelo as the two, beautiful both of body, vigorous of soul, paced back to the cottage together. Both faces shone as with an inner light.

"These things are a mystery, brother beloved. Is it not written, 'Before they call, I will answer?'" Angelo said, and added, "I was thanking God for all that unites us in the Religion, however sad our separations seem. Perhaps at this very hour Illuminato, Elias, and those others have received, even as we, the Food of Immortality." John liked those words.

But now Benito called him to assist in practical cares, and presently, in holiday mood, like a troop of school-

boys, those brothers were breakfasting. Nor did Lady Poverty disdain to share their feast, for dishes were few; pure water drawn from under a film of ice in the brook took the place of wine, and the bread of dried chestnuts was not easy to chew.

"Now! Now!" said Bernard, who was graciously playing the host. "Never a word have we heard, John and I, since we left Assisi. What was the temper of Elias after the death of Brother Cæsar (on whose soul may light perpetual shine)? Has Brother Aymon achieved anything? Where is he? John longs to know. What has happened to John de Laudibus? How have fared Brother Morico and the others who were with us on that day?"

Another question trembled in John's heart, but he was silent.

Sylvester heaved a sigh. "Elias was infuriated. Illuminato, whom I see often, says that never has he seen him so angry — not when he threw Brother Cæsar into prison, and Brother Andrew of Spello, who is there still. John de Laudibus is said to be high in his favor, though kept for the moment in the background. What he did was to send his men from the Order into a peaceful group who were but praying for Brother Cæsar's soul. And they burst in, those brothers with their heavy shoes, and tore the habits right off the backs of twelve of the others, and whipped them and drove them to flight; and where they are now, God knows. Morico was one of them. I do not suppose he feels any more tolerant toward Brother Elias."

Brother Bernard lifted his hands toward heaven. "That we of the Religion should brawl like the bad boys I used long ago to chastise, when outraged in my dignity as citizen, for their noisy quarrels through the Assisi streets! 'T is a scandal!"

"Illuminato thinks we made a mistake in trying to rescue Brother Cæsar," Sylvester went on. "I am not sure myself that we did not. If it had not been for that young Brother Pierre —"

"Never look back, Brother Sylvester," interrupted Brother Angelo genially. "What is past is past. Often" — turning to John — "I think of what you said: that he thanked us from Paradise because we refused at the pinch to hurt another man in order to release him. You did, at least. For me, I confess John de Laudibus was too much for me. Meantime, this event has made more clear the breach between the two groups of those who claim the name of Francis. And daily the life of those around Brother Elias grows more lax."

"Brother Illuminato is forever reminding me that Brother Elias' party has the sanction of the Head of Christendom," said Sylvester. "And we cannot deny it. That bull of his, *Quo Elongati*, with its approval of trustees —"

"Oh, those trustees!" John broke in; and Brother Thomas, sitting next him, murmured *sotto voce*, "They always worried you."

"If it is wrong for one person to hold money, why is it not wrong for another?" John went on, unheeding.

"And if we have all the good of money while others have all the trouble, what is that but an evasion?"

"After all," said Sylvester, "it is not just the same to be greedy for one's self and to take thought for others. Now I used to be greedy for myself."

"Rather for your Church," said Bernard dejectedly.

"Ah, but I was proud of that Church because it was mine! Naught but self-glory!" groaned Sylvester. "Father Francis read my heart when I complained that he had not paid me enough, and he shamed me by flinging your money at me by handfuls!" And the two old men looked at each other affectionately. As for John, a vivid memory rose in him of poor Brother Thomas at Exeter, counting the community money with a stick. But excitement was working in Bernard. He rose laboriously to his feet, his spare body trembling.

"Francis would have loathed the arguments of the *Quo Elongati!*" he exclaimed. "Ownership was ownership to his mind, whether direct or delegated to an interposed person; and it was always a lure of the devil. If once we allow another principle, we might as well adopt the Rule of Benedict and be done with it." (John's mind flew to his Uncle Philip.) "That is what the Holy See would like. But our Francis was an innovator. He did not want us to be monks. He did not revive an old way of life; he started a new one — nay, not a new, for it is the Way of Perfection shown by Christ and His Apostles. They were not monks. And I shall follow Francis in holy poverty to the end, as the gospel to which he and I opened when we sought

for guidance at the Church of St. Nicholas bade me: 'Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven. And come, take up thy cross, and follow Me.'" Brother Bernard sank to his seat, his hands shaking.

"I am with you, brother. You know I am, or I should never have taken that climb up from Saphro," said Brother Sylvester plaintively. "But I wish I knew what to say to Illuminato."

There was a little pause. John changed his seat and settled himself quietly on a stone at the feet of Bernard. Then Brother Angelo spoke thoughtfully.

"Elias and his group are finding an argument in the way you live, you and other obstinate ones. See! More and more you are keeping to yourselves. You, Rufino, Masseo, Leo, you go off, you flee from men, you live in hermitages. But Francis meant us to live in the world, not to run away from it, and he meant us to live together. And as soon as people live together — "

Brother Thomas sighed deeply and nodded. Brother Angelo turned to him.

"Did you not thrive pretty well under trustees, in the English houses?"

Thomas evaded, a little morosely. "There is a strange thing about those English. They have no consistency. Now they refuse a grant from the Crown, now petition for it. Black's black, white's white to an Italian; the English muddle along among half tints."

John flared up angrily. "Do not talk so of Brother Adam Marsh! He is firm in his mind. Think how he mourns to have energy wasted on stones which should be devoted to souls."

"He is a true son of Francis," Brother Thomas agreed, "and so are many others over there. I honor the English chapter. But the light of Francis' spirit does not shine so directly through those men at Oxford as it does here through these who knew him and were with him. They care too much for learning in Oxford — it diverts their minds. As for those visitors — I don't know. They make a tremendous point of managing one's own affairs in England. Now I have not learned from Francis that it is a duty to defend one's rights."

"We defend ours against Brother Elias," suggested Angelo.

"For the sake of a more sacred obedience." Bernard spoke with spirit. "Obedience to the Rule to which we are vowed before God."

"And to the Will of our blessed Father Francis. We are pledged to that, whatever Gregory's bull may say," added Brother Sylvester.

Thomas was pacing up and down restlessly. "The violation of the Rule is almost forced on us, my brothers," he brooded. "Where is it observed in fullness if not here in the wilderness? Not men only, but circumstance, but the very necessities of love, prevent us from following it perfectly."

"What did the Holy Father say — not about us,

but about those sects which press devotion to poverty to the point of going about naked?" interposed Sylvester. "'The more men wish to live like saints, the more they try to behave like beasts.' I heard Elias and Illuminato gloating over that saying."

"You exaggerate, Brother Thomas," Brother Bernard was saying. "Very perfect poverty is observed with perfect love in our little convents of the strict observance. Over there, for instance," and he waved toward the summit of the range, "across the Pass, in the Marches, the brothers live together in small and mean places and in most holy joy."

John thought with affection of the tiny place at Exeter. But again he saw Brother Thomas sadly counting money with a stick.

"Even in the Marches," Brother Angelo was speaking, "they accept trustees, though often under protest. And our dear sisters, the Poor Ladies, how are they to exist without some sense of security? Poverty is of harder practice for a woman than for a man."

"Is security embound with property then?" sighed Brother Thomas.

"Property! How it clogged me!" cried John. "'Mine, mine' — how I hated the word!"

"We all hate it," agreed Brother Sylvester. "We all want to go back to Eden, where there was no property till the serpent entered. What was the first property ever known? The fig leaves Eve and Adam covered them with!" He slapped his thigh, with a cackling laugh.

"Property and shame — they entered the world together," Bernard assented sombrely.

Brother Angelo was speaking to John.

"Mine, mine — yes, a bad word. But ours, ours — that is not so bad."

"Monks say 'ours, ours.' I have not observed that they are free from greed," retorted Brother Bernard.

"How can they be, while they live in a greedy world?" reflected Thomas; and set John to thinking.

"Then," said Angelo triumphantly, "what about 'yours, yours'? That is better. I declare, I do not see anything the matter with it. I believe I see the way out. Let everyone be trustee for everybody else. Then shall all be poor and rich together. Then we can have security without greed."

Sylvester clapped his thigh again, and Bernard too laughed a little.

"Alas!" — Brother Thomas was his most sardonic. "I have observed that people are not very careful about what they do not own themselves. As has been remarked, it is a greedy world."

"But need it always be greedy?" cried John eagerly. "I think Angelo is prophesying a time when everyone will want to escape from saying 'mine' — will seek to follow Christ and the Apostles."

"Likely thought." Sylvester was scornful.

"Why not?" John persisted. "Must we of the Religion hold ourselves holier than other men? We only show the Way. Already the brothers and sisters of

Penitence, who feel as we do, are spreading everywhere. I found them in every little town, as we came from Paris. I do believe the day will come when all Christian folk will feel how unpleasant it is to say 'mine.' "

"God grant it," shrugged Brother Bernard; and John drooped, for his enthusiasm aroused no echo. Bernard went on: —

"My dear son, there are very deceitful ladies wandering through the world — bastard sisters of Lady Poverty. There is Avarice, and she wears fair masks, and people often give her the name of Foresight, and have said that it is good to have and to hold money for purposes of charity. And in another mask she is called Prudence, and says that we cannot work out our salvation in peace unless we provide ourselves with all things needful. And she has an ally named Sloth; and I fear these ladies will roam about as long as time persists."

"Time reaches far," murmured John. "You think only of the world that is — not of the world that may be." But no one heeded him.

Brother Thomas was speaking, and seriously.

"Angelo's grand idea does not take into account the care it is to be a trustee. And worldly care is what Francis released us from. I thought we were to be free from all that dung." Bernard nodded.

"Dung grows flowers," remarked Brother Angelo. "The very flowers of love grow from the muck, when one piles up the heap and watches it for others."

John liked Angelo better and better.

"In the old days on Monte Casale," he went on, "I had to put much thought on feeding my robbers, whom the blessed Father had given into my charge. They did so like good food, poor fellows! And they were enormous eaters. But it did me no harm to plan for them. Many of us have to consider material things carefully — our brothers who care for the lepers, for instance."

"By the way," Brother Bernard broke in irrelevantly, "do you know anything, Angelo, or you, Sylvester, about that young Brother Pierre who was with us on Brother Cæsar's celestial birthday?"

Both shook their heads, and both with a look of sadness. Why had this question, so urgent in his own heart, occurred at that moment to Bernard, John wondered. But, excited by the conversation, he went on with the hints of Brother Angelo, half in fun, half in earnest.

"Everybody a trustee for everybody else — I like that idea better and better. It would take out the sting from ownership; one would never feel one's self thieving. Let us have the community, as a whole, trustee for its every member. Then, there would be no mine nor thine; it would all be ours and yours. Oh, the refreshing idea! Brother Angelo and I must think it out, and we may need a little time. But don't you like it, brothers?" His boyish face was aglow.

Brother Sylvester slapped his leg again. Brother Angelo looked pleased, but dubious. And Brother Bernard exclaimed impatiently: —

"Now, now! Here we trifle, and the morning wears away. Have done with absurdities. The light on your path and mine is serene, and these quibbles are foolish. We must have more news. John wants to know what is happening to the English delegation. And so do I."

"Did Brother Aymon really have a conference with Brother Elias?" John asked anxiously.

Sylvester nodded. "Brother Illuminato says it was the saddest talk he ever heard. And I was told that Brother Aymon looked haggard afterward. But in a day or two he went to Rome. And the Holy Father, who is very intimate with Elias, was not at all pleased, so we heard, with his coming, and held the delegation off. Gregory has known Brother Aymon a long time, of course — ever since Aymon was sent to him with the questions that led to the *Quo Elongati*, nine years ago; and there was never much sympathy between them, even though Aymon did not resent that bull as we did. At first, the Holy Father refused to see them; but he can maintain his own very well, can Brother Aymon."

John, sensitive to atmospheres, felt in the attitude of these Italian extremists toward the Englishman respect mingled with a little grudging doubt. But Sylvester went on: —

"He had gathered at Rome delegates from all the English provinces. Brother Richard Rufus the lecturer was there from France, and that delightful Brother Giordano da Giano, who used to be our neighbor but is now stationed in Germany, and many others."

"Almost a general chapter!" exclaimed Brother Bernard.

"Yes. But Elias had reached Rome first, and had nearly persuaded Gregory that the whole affair was illegal. If it had not been for the letters the delegation had from Bishop Grossteste to the Pope and to Cardinal Raynall of Ostia, it might never have been accorded audience."

Groans arose from the little group. "Oh, feeling ran high, I 'm told," said Brother Sylvester.

"It did indeed." This was Brother Thomas in an undertone. He had been sitting silent, a frown on his forehead.

"Brother Thomas — I believe you were there!" exclaimed Angelo.

"I was — for my sins," said Thomas rather reluctantly. All looked at him eagerly. "Such controversy! Such heat! Such anger on all sides!" He sighed. "Ah, my brothers, if you seek to live in the pure air of love and poverty, be cautioned: avoid Rome."

"But tell us! Tell us all!" urged Bernard.

"Well — when audience was granted at last, discussion turned on the visitors. Brother Arnulf was a help. You remember how he said that the Devil incarnate could not have invented a more subtle scheme for snaring souls than that system. At the same time, the English brothers themselves realized that there is something to be said on both sides. Before long those complaints fell into the background, and men were led

on — Brother Aymon evidently with great distress of mind — into a complete arraignment against Brother Elias. The delegates all united in saying that the situation was scandalous and that the purity of the Rule must be restored. Also there was much insistence on the Will of Francis, as of equal obligation with the Rule, whatever Papal bulls may say. I did not think Aymon so keen on this."

"Probably," said John, "because the insistence it places on work with the hands is a little embarrassing to those who are as impassioned as Brother Aymon for the exacting life of the scholar." And he sighed a little.

"Finally," Brother Thomas continued, "the Holy Father, who is a man of astute mind and versed, as one perceives, in handling large issues, sent those delegates all back to their own provinces, to choose a commission that should draw up their proposals in writing. I understand that they are all to return to Rome toward the end of April; and a general chapter is called for Pentecost, in mid-May."

The brothers drew a long breath. Gravity had settled on them.

"Father Bernard, may I see you apart?" asked Thomas, rising. "It is for that purpose I am sent hither. And glad I was of the mission: to see you once more is water to him who thirsts. Often I have talked of you to this young man"; and he threw John one of his infrequent smiles.

The two withdrew. During their conference the

others remained silent and brooding, the stillness punctuated by the cheery blows of Benito's axe. It occurred to John that perhaps Benito knew more than any of them concerning the secrets of peace and poverty. As Bernard and Thomas returned to the group, Benito approached, grinning.

"Will the brothers stay till to-morrow?" he asked.

Brother Sylvester pulled himself up. "If I am to be in Rome by May, I must be starting," he said with his dry laugh. "I suppose we must scramble down to Saphro: but from there to Nocera and on, I for one shall follow a good road."

"Let us all follow the road," said Brother Angelo. "Let us go by Foligno and Spello. So we shall return in large measure by the very route followed by dear Father Francis, on his last journey from Bagnara to Assisi. You will love that, Brother John." He looked radiantly at the young Englishman.

John caught his breath.

"Surely you come with us?" said Angelo.

"Yes. But how did you know?" John questioned.

"Brother Rufino said that you would return with us," Angelo replied.

"That is curious; for until yesterday I had no least idea of leaving Brother Bernard."

"Rufino knows much before one knows it one's self." Brother Bernard smiled and sighed. "You will be near him, I hope, during these next weeks, John my son; and you go with my tender blessing."

VIII

RIVO TORTO

Talk was possible on the open road from Nocera to Foligno. John was glad to keep step with Brother Thomas. Since his parting from that bitter and lovable friend in Oxford, much had happened to his mind and heart. He found himself telling Brother Thomas about Pierre.

"It is strange — I have for him a different feeling from that I have for you, for Brother Angelo, for many in the Religion. Love for you all in Christ has given a new climate to my life; but from Pierre to me darts a direct ray of the sun. It can burn — the sunlight. It can pierce. Oh brother, help me to find my friend! My ears weary for his voice. Lacking him, my eyes are desolate."

Brother Thomas glanced inscrutably at the eager face, then looked off to the horizon. "Youth to youth; so it must be," John heard him mutter.

"You say this Brother Pierre fled, having cast off his garment?" he inquired, still not facing John.

John assented. "It was a moment of anguish; all passed in a flash. I did not see him plainly. I could not have heard aright the cry that came from his lips."

Brother Angelo had drawn near and was listening attentively. "What did you seem to hear?" he asked very gently.

John hesitated, stammered. "I thought — impossible! — I thought he cried, 'Unclean! Unclean!' How could Pierre have thought himself unclean? I, I, if any! But would he have used that cruel word about me?"

Angelo gave Thomas a significant glance, unheeded by John at the moment.

"There are strange groups, are there not, wandering in these parts?" reflected Brother Thomas.

"There are indeed," said Angelo. "Ever since the days of the Alleluia, six years ago, and earlier. That was a strange time, the Alleluia! The populace went mad. Throngs of men, women, and children, marching from town to town in highest excitement, singing, waving palm branches. But other groups are stranger still. Some scourge themselves till the blood flows — others wander about naked —"

"John's friend may conceivably have fled to join such a group," Brother Thomas suggested.

"I have thought of that," John exclaimed. "The more, that Pierre, though far more loyal than I to Madonna Poverty, had in a way hardly a special sense for our Religion. His beloved uncle had been burned at the stake as one of the Cathari; and Pierre was

fascinated by their strange doctrines. He brooded on an idea that God made the spirit alone; that soul and body proceeded from him of the shadows; and he seemed to hate his poor body till I would tell him jesting that Saint Francis bade us be friendly to Brother Ass. Pierre hoped when death was nigh to practise what he called the Endura, that he might enter clean the life to come. Ah, he played with dreams! I listened, enthralled, but always I came back, came home, to the teachings of our Father Francis. I questioned at times if Pierre would stay with us. He clung to Brother Cæsar. But Cæsar has died, and we — alas! we have failed him!"

"If he has joined one of those heretical wandering sects, you will not easily find him," said Brother Angelo. A slight expression of distaste was on his countenance.

"I think I shall succeed," returned John, not however telling the ground of his assurance — Pierre's voice in his heart. "You will help me, brothers?" he appealed.

Brother Thomas shook his head. "I will inquire as I go, but I am leaving you at Foligno. For, woe 's me, I am stationed at Rome till Aymon shall return. Ah, that Roman atmosphere! How I hate it! Who can keep pure in Rome?" The pained and sour look was on his face.

"Always it seems, brother, as if your duty laid on you what you most detested," reflected John with sympathy.

Brother Thomas shrugged. "You need not think it a peculiarity of mine not to like Rome. Ask any decent man. All wickedness festers in the Holy City. And oh me, worst among churchmen! Each weaves a strand in a close web of deceit. The greed of the clergy! Their quarrels, their intrigues! Their extortions, their concubines, their luxury and pomp! Poisonous fumes proceed from them, fumes from the dens of Hell."

Sullen fire glowed in Brother Thomas's deep-set eyes. But Brother Angelo's gentleness was gone. He was serious, even stern.

"Brother! You speak of the Church of the Living God!"

"You know all I say is true! You know the temporal possessions of the Church betray her to the world forever!" cried Thomas.

"Property, property again!" groaned John to himself.

"Accursed thrice be the gift of Constantine!" mourned Thomas.

"Amen," said Brother Sylvester unexpectedly.

"Our business is not with cursing," Brother Angelo returned. And for a time the four friars walked on in silence. Brother Thomas' tense figure relaxed by degrees. He spoke with softened tones.

"Brother, you do well to rebuke me. My mind dwells overmuch on evil, especially on the sins of Holy Church. When they torment me, I will remember Brother Bernard's altar in the forest." And the others smiled on him.

"I shall stay in Rome till Whitsuntide," Thomas continued, speaking to John. "I have orders to keep closely in touch with Brother Arnulf. He alone of our party has the ear of Gregory. His wish to obtain certain information gave me the privilege of this journey. Let me meet you, John, in Rome. Brother Aymon spoke of you. He will expect you there."

"Did he resent my leaving the delegation?" asked John anxiously.

"How could he, since you went with Brother Bernard? But, to be frank, he alluded to you only for a moment; other matters weighed on his mind." And as John's transparent countenance showed a touch of hurt chagrin, Brother Thomas added kindly, "You will find many friends at Rome, some of our old Exeter group. Brother Gilbert I know is coming. And do not," he added, "take too much to heart the scoldings of your crabbed brother. My world is sad, within as without the Church of God. But I can say this: wherever I wander, I find that through the spirit of the blessed Francis, and through his Lesser Brothers, a new birth into the very life of love is coming into the Church. Who knows? Some day she may be worthy to lead the world to brotherhood. John, I will pray that you may find your friend. But do not you forget the great affairs, the high mission, of our Order."

After resting the night at Foligno and bidding Brother Thomas farewell, the three others set their faces toward Assisi. And especially after they had passed Spello,

the road, winding along the lower slopes of the great mountain range, was one of the fairest John had ever seen — the road Francis had taken, journeying to his death.

"Were you with him on that journey, brothers?" John asked reverently.

"Not I," answered Brother Sylvester, "but Brother Angelo here, and Masseo, and Rufino, and Leo. And of course there were the soldiers."

"Soldiers?"

"Assisi had sent her men at arms to guard him, lest Perugia should gain his body, since all knew he was not long for this world." Sylvester spoke not irreverently, but with a matter-of-factness which made John wince. He turned for sympathy to Angelo, only to find that brother wrapped in emotion and heedless of what his companions were saying.

"He was very happy, the dear Father," mused Angelo, "but he suffered cruelly from the movement of the litter." He paused, absorbed in memory, then, suddenly aware of John hanging breathless on his words, spoke in a whisper. "The wind took his habit once, blew it away from his poor body. And I saw — oh John, I saw the wound in his side. It was in this very stretch of road where we are walking." Angelo's eyes were full of tears.

"Brother Thomas said once," John ventured in hushed tones, "that Brother Elias was to blame for those wounds. Francis never cursed, nor must we; but — do I begin to understand?"

Brother Angelo looked very grave. "That Francis endured tortures from the policies of Elias and from the failure of the brothers to follow holy poverty to the end, is sure. From the hour of his return from the East, his agony began; I think it killed him. Of that agony the blessed wounds were the sign. But the cause of them lay deeper than anything which could be wrought by Brother Elias, or another. From the figure of the Crucified streamed the rays that pierced him."

"The Crucified too was wounded in the house of His friends," mused John. The three were silent, moving softly below the great mountain, while John's thought reverted to the vigil of his profession, and to that well-remembered faint, strange tingling in his palms.

"You will help me find my Pierre, Brother Angelo?" he said at last, and waited, hurt, expectant, while the other kept his face half turned away.

"Many and diverse are the wounds of love. To avoid pain for another is perhaps as cowardly as to avoid it for one's self," Angelo was murmuring in undertone. Finally, unsmiling eyes sought the eyes of John.

"Yes, Brother John, I will help you," said Brother Angelo slowly. "This very day I will help you if I can. But if that help should fail, I know of none other that I can render."

Through the quiet land they walked on peacefully. Already a hint of spring was felt — not in the olives, which always convey in spring a sense of immemorial

age and reserve their freshness for the autumn, but in the grass greening here and there, in stars-of-Bethlehem, shyly opening their cool white touched to cooler green, in the taller allium, giving a fairy delicacy to sheltered glades. Willows, bending over the watercourses, waved gleaming challenge to the wintry grays which still dominated the forests; living tints, speaking of living sap astir, brightened the twigs and branches of the undergrowth. John moved entranced. The air itself had a soft earth perfume, unknown to the sharp severity of the upland woods where Brother Bernard sojourned. Always the wide plain below them, always above the sheltering hills.

> "If I come by that gate which is called fragrance,
> I find Thee breathing sweet in every creature,"

John crooned, and presently he and Brother Angelo, Sylvester's sharp voice joining in now and then, took to singing as they walked. Carefree, joyous, in spite of his longing for Pierre, John welcomed renewal of the extraordinary inward rapture of his early novitiate.

Rather more than halfway from Spello to Assisi, Brother Sylvester broke off in midst of praises of Brother Wind. "Look up," he said. John obeyed, and saw the buildings of a noble monastery rising on the flanks of the mountain above.

"The Benedictine monastery," said Sylvester, "where Francis took refuge, and whence we derive our precious loan of the Little Portion. Year by year we pay for rent a basket of fresh fish." And John,

gazing, sent a thought of love to his uncle Philip in far-away Cornwall.

"And higher, to the right," this was Angelo, "on the farther side of that gorge which pierces the range, do you see a castle on the crags? There — where goes that avenue of great live oaks among the prickly gorse. The castle of the Scifi, where Sister Clare spent her youth, though it was from the Scifi palace in Assisi that she fled to the protection of Francis."

"Brother Rufino too is of that noble house, you know," added Sylvester.

"I had a little sister once. She died when I was twelve years old," said John. "I wish that I might see Sister Clare."

"That is not impossible," returned Brother Sylvester kindly. "The rules for the enclosure of the sisters are stricter than in the early days, but you might be appointed to beg for them. They live in the little convent of San Damiano, farther on, at the foot of the hill."

"Where the Crucifix spoke to Saint Francis. I know, Brother Thomas told me the story, and he had it direct from Brother Leo," said John with pride. "My little sister's hair was pure flaxen," he went on irrelevantly. "I used to twist it round my fingers and play she was an angel — as she soon became. Of what color is the hair of Sister Clare?"

"How should I know, under her wimple?" laughed Brother Angelo. But Brother Sylvester broke in dryly: —

"I know very well. Was I not in the Portiuncula that night when Father Francis clipped her locks at midnight? And they fell to the floor in waves of dusky gold, the jewels dropping from her neck no brighter. And she looked that night, our little Sister Clare, about the age you say was the age of your sister."

"The face is worn now, with fine lines," sighed Brother Angelo, "but eternal youth dwells in her eyes. I trust indeed that you shall see Sister Clare some day; it is next to seeing Francis himself. I am glad that she can still trust in Brother Elias," he added, turning to Sylvester. "It makes for union among us. I cannot bear sharp divisions among us of the Religion."

And now Assisi came in sight, resting, rose-misted, on its gray hill crowned by the high Rocca. Returning from Nocera in an opposite direction from that in which he had gone, John felt surprised again at the loveliness of the little town.

"Where are you taking me, brothers?" he asked, with natural curiosity.

"Not into Assisi," Angelo replied. "Brother Sylvester will return there. He is well regarded, not only by Brother Illuminato, but also in a way by Elias. But for you it will be wise to remain yet awhile on the outskirts of the town. I shall take you —" he stopped, hesitating. "It is my wish to take you to Brother Rufino. He is expecting us at the Carceri. But first," and now Angelo spoke firmly, though John fancied with a touch of restraint, "first you shall see

one more of our holy sites." He pointed down to a settlement of gray buildings in the plain.

"Rivo Torto," he said.

"Where first the brothers lived together!" exclaimed John.

"Where I joined them, on a day blessed forever; and where we abode in joy and peace till a donkey drove us out," said Brother Sylvester.

"It is larger than I thought — almost a village," John commented.

"Those are the dwellings of the leper settlement." Brother Angelo spoke in his most colorless voice. "Yes, there are, as you see, a number. The better looking are for the lepers of more wealth and higher social class; those mean huts shelter the poorest of the afflicted. I do not know that the rich ones are any better off, but all distinctions of the outer world are observed among lepers. They are a well organized community here."

"We were not well organized though, in the good days when we shared the care of them," said Sylvester with his dry chuckle, "unless you call it organization that Father Francis scratched each one's name on the beam below which he must sleep in our little hut. Yes — good days, I say, blessed and merry, though the flesh quailed sometimes. Shall I ever forget the loathsomeness of the leper Brother John the Simple once brought to us? And the sight of Father Francis, eating with the poor Christian, whose rot fell between his fingers into the food? Good day, brothers both; my way lies to the town."

He was gone. "Why do you look so white of a sudden, Brother John?" inquired Angelo.

"It is nothing." John spoke with effort. "It is only — only that story of the leper. I had not heard it. Brother, —" and his intensity mounted, — "I long to die for our holy faith. I dream always of being sent to martyrdom in lands afar. I would follow Lady Poverty to the end. But —" and he lifted candid, troubled eyes to Angelo — "but I could not care for lepers. God forgive me!" Once more, as in his firelight vision at Saphro, the face that had driven him into the Cornish forest rose before him.

"Our way here lies down the hill." There was a tone in Brother Angelo's voice which John had not heard before. Without further talk, they wound down a little path to the settlement by the lower road. The lazar houses seemed peaceful enough from a distance, but presently a curious, beating sound was heard. It came nearer.

"The clapper of one of the sick," said Angelo. "He should not be on this narrow path. They are confined by honor to the broad road." A piteous figure strode by, his face averted, and the two friars shrank close into the hedge to let him pass.

"There are none of our Religion here now," said Brother Angelo. "When we left that wee hut yonder, where we lived, as Brother Sylvester said, till we were driven out by the peasant seeking shelter for his donkey, we went to the Portiuncula. The Order of the Crucigers now care for the lepers, though often the Lesser

Brothers give them aid. Brother Morico, by the way, used to be of that Order, and still he devotes himself to that work. You did not see Brother Morico at his best. He is devotion itself in his care for the afflicted."

"I thank you for bringing me," said John faintly. Courtesy dictated the speech; he was feeling somewhat ill.

Looking at John straight and solemnly, Brother Angelo repeated the phrase John had overheard on the way.

"'Diverse are the wounds of love.' Will you wait for me here a few moments? I have an errand within."

Left alone among the olives, in this pleasant spot dedicate to holy memories, John became a prey to horror. He saw Brother Angelo entering the gate of the enclosure that marked the dwellings of the better class. How long Angelo lingered! Was it stench from the lazar house that filled the sweet air? The sky was dark with foggy, bat-like wings, which waved noisomeness into his nostrils.

Brother Angelo was returning now. No — he had bent his steps toward the precincts of the poorer lepers. What was this awful dread, this nausea of soul and body? John could not pray nor breathe. Hands clenched, he bowed under the onslaught of the Powers of the Pit.

The fog had vanished, and the stench. A star-of-Bethlehem bloomed at his feet. And Angelo was coming back. His step was elastic, his eyes beamed relief.

"My quest was fruitless," he called, almost gayly. "Come! The day wears. Brother Rufino is waiting."

"It is then decided that we go there?" asked John, surprised.

Angelo assented. "There is nothing to detain you here below." He paused an instant. "Before we go, say after me the prayer always used when a leper is separated from his fellows." And John, his voice trembling a little, followed Angelo's clear tones of supplication: —

"Almighty God, who through the patient suffering of Thy Son hast broken down the pride of the old enemy, grant to Thy servants such patience as shall enable them to bear with resignation the ill that has befallen them. Amen."

"The climb to the Carceri will take scarce an hour," said Angelo. With buoyant gait he strode up the mountain, leaving Assisi to the left, below. His constraint had vanished. As they climbed, John felt in him an affection that radiated peace.

"You see from here the town as it was known to Brother Francis," said he. "The Hill of Hell — or of Paradise — is hidden, with Brother Elias' work upon it."

In a descending ravine high on the mountain, among clustered rocks that seemed ready to fall into the abyss, Brother Rufino was waiting. "Welcome!" he called to the pilgrims clambering up. His thin face was free and happy.

"See him!" laughed Brother Angelo. "Here Brother Rufino is at home. His aspect changes as soon as he treads these rocks."

Gladly John responded to the welcome, and joyfully surveyed the damp cave which Rufino had set aside for him. From the entrance, over which wreaths of ivy drooped, one could look at will into dizzy depths below or off to the narrow shining distance framed by the walls of the ravine. "I have never seen an abode I liked so well — no, not Brother Bernard's cottage at Saphro!" exclaimed John happily.

But in a moment he turned sober. "I cannot stay here with you, dear brother, as I did with Brother Bernard. I am come to seek my friend, Brother Pierre." He looked almost reproachfully at Angelo. "You promised help," he said.

"I promised to do my best. I did so — and in vain," responded Angelo soberly.

"Do you know anything about Brother Pierre, Angelo?" asked Rufino. And Brother Angelo shook his head.

"Of his whereabouts I have no hint," he replied. "John can seek him from here as a centre as well as from elsewhere. Brothers, it is high noon, and past. Shall we say Sext together?"

IX

SEEKING

"As well from here as from elsewhere." Yes — but John faltered. Since the experience at Rivo Torto an obscure repugnance burrowed within him. Oh to sojourn on these clean heights, surrendered wholly to quest of the Light Rufino evidently saw! But no! Presently he must to Rome, where life, entangled in coils within coils, writhed and struggled, where ideals clashed or were dragged through the mire, where, according to Brother Thomas, devils paraded in holy garb. He foresaw Rome as an ordeal. What did problems of Church and State, what did even the affairs of the Order, matter to him? Had he not a duty to his own soul?

And before Rome — what? Not rest, not singleness of heart. He heard a summons, recurrent, intermittent, to a weary search which might be forever baffled. For there was little hope of his finding Pierre. And if his search was successful? At what success might mean, his flesh and his heart quailed. For after that hour at Rivo Torto he could no longer

disguise from himself what his friends thought to be the probable condition of Brother Pierre.

Brother Angelo had gone. Brother Rufino was the most silent person John had ever known. Bernard, to be sure, had left him much to himself, but his very presence, so grave, so benignant, was companionable, and John had found him ever and anon ready for pleasant converse. Brother Rufino lived in a world of his own. A young brother, no more than a lad, coming up every day or two from Assisi, served as "mother," and he was speechless too. John, in his nest of a cell suspended in luminous mid-air, knew for once an absolute solitude.

And now, if ever, so far as outward conditions go, he might have enjoyed the singleness of heart he craved. But he was inwardly rent. Still the voice of Pierre calling, still his responding love; still that shuddering recoil which there was so much to justify. Had not Pierre made clear his desire to sever the relation between them? Did not delicacy and right pride forbid John to pursue him? And on that night hour among the olives, when he had realized first Pierre's withdrawal from his intimacy, had he not been called to abandon the claims of earthly love? The soul should concentrate itself unincumbered on union with its Source. What save renunciation of conflicting claims was the significance of Naughting?

The Way of Mary, the Way of the contemplative — higher by common consent than the Way of Martha! Here, at the Carceri, how perfectly that Way could be

followed! If he went seeking Pierre, if he plunged into the confusion of Rome, what would happen to contemplation?

His eyes lighted on a little plant growing by the edge of his cave. Small heart-shaped leaves, rose-flushed beneath, exquisitely marked above in designs of white and green; slender flower stalks from which tiny buds, tight-furled, hung pendant. They scarcely needed to open, to fulfill the plant in perfect beauty.

> "If I come out by sight, love's all I see,
> In every form, in every hue, it's painted,"

John said to himself softly.

"All I see?" That eaten face, in Cornwall! Again it rose before him.

"When the buds open, I will start," thought he. And another day passed by.

On the fourth day from his coming, Brother Rufino spoke! They were sitting at their early repast, brought by young Brother Beppe — if repast it could be called, for Rufino, like John, ate his herbs uncooked. Dawn had hardly faded.

"And have you observed, my son, how wondrous are the ways of Love?" Yes, Rufino was speaking, tranquilly, incidentally, as if continuing a conversation. John caught his tone.

"Surely, Father. But in what special way?" he asked, as tranquilly as the other. And Rufino, eyes filled with clear light, fixed on that far slit of horizon where amethyst was yielding to cloudy azure, pro-

ceeded. His voice was extraordinarily musical, his enunciation even more pure than Bernard's.

"In that it always demands what is most foreign to nature, and most offensive to the natural man," he said.

John reflected. "Always?" he questioned.

"At least, among love's chosen. '*Nudi nudam crucem*,'" returned Brother Rufino dreamily.

"I recall —" John also was a little dreamy, as a man to whom the sound of his own voice has become strange — "I recall a very dear brother to whom I said lately that it always seems as if his duty laid on him what he most detested."

Rufino's silence was sympathetic and expectant.

"This brother," John went on, "has in most marked degree two horrors: the horror of any contact with filthy lucre and the horror of mingling in controversy. And when first I knew him he was almoner to a small community and forced by the care laid on him to count and watch our resources; and now he has been sent into the hot centre of the struggle at Rome."

Was John mistaken? Was it possible that Brother Rufino was laughing?

"I will tell you what happened to myself," said he; and surely his tones were gleeful. "From my childhood I shrank from men. I fled if accosted. To be conspicuous was hell. I was a very proper young man. What do you think Francis ordered me?" A spasm, half anguished, half amused, convulsed the aristocratic face, wrinkling its lines. "He bade me strip myself; proceed, naked; naked enter the streets

of Assisi; naked mount the pulpit of my name-saint San Rufino, and naked preach to the people."

"You obeyed?" gasped John.

Rufino hesitated. "In part, at least. I went as he prescribed. I mounted that pulpit. Naked I mounted it, and I tried in all sincerity to bring the people the Word of God. But I was tongue-tied! Never a word would come. There I stood, fiery red, aware of their amazed faces, my whole body one blush — and dumb!" Still that look of fine amusement. "Tell Brother John what happened next, Beppe," said he to the little serving brother. "Or no — you are too young to remember."

"All Assisi remembers," said Beppe eagerly. "The blessed Francis himself, clothed — or rather, not clothed, just as you were, Father, came running, crying, into the cathedral, and climbed up beside you. He kissed you, as if he were ashamed of that hard demand he had made on you, and he was not tongue-tied, he! He talked to the people, of the love of God he talked; and there was not a dry eye in the house; and many were turned to God that day."

Rufino was abstracted again, his clear-lit face looking off to the horizon. Would he now remain silent again four days more, John wondered.

No. Abruptly he turned his eyes on John. A piercing light was in them. His utterance was crisp.

"Do you know that devils in guise of Shining Ones can haunt this place? Look! Yonder turmoil of rocks marks where a fiend once fled."

And presently, after a breathless pause: "My son, what most offends your natural man?" he asked.

John, shocked out of all reserve, replied instantly with his inmost truth, now clearly revealed to himself.

"Contact with pain and with disease," moaned he.

Brother Rufino made no sign of having heard. His face turned serenely again to the horizon.

John sprang to his feet, and as he did so caught sight of the little plant he had been watching. Morning sunlight fell full on it, and behold! the buds had unfolded. Purest rose, most delicate in design, fair as a thought of God, the wee blossoms of the cyclamen sent up from fostering earth their subtle fragrance.

John hesitated one instant, longing to ask a blessing. But Rufino's thin face was no longer cognizant of him. And with the agile steps of youth he swung himself down from the broken crags, off into the world of pain.

And far and wide he wandered, and pain enough he saw; for his quest led him to hospitals in every town, and to the lazar houses in the suburbs. But no trace of Pierre. Not only in the haunts of men, but in the open roads and in the fields and forests he sought his friend; for it was always possible that Pierre had joined some wandering band, Sarabites or Bizochi, strange folk common enough in these parts as all over Europe, who roamed about impelled by restlessness in the name of sanctity. But he met no success. And everywhere his eyes, which had been open to beauty, now saw pain only, even among the patient beasts of the field, and

the birds that sought their prey; in fair Umbria as in Exeter's remembered slums; in all the predatory creation, where each lived on the life of each. Alas! Beauty itself was only a mask of pain.

At the house in Assisi through whose portal Pierre had vanished, they could tell nothing. They had been kind, had flung him a garment as he fled through the garden down the hill. John searched at first in the direction of Perugia, going as far afield as Lake Thrasymene, and south to Todi. At Collistrada, on the way to Perugia, in a leper settlement where the memory of Francis was cherished, he found a slight trace. The Crucigers were now in charge of it, and they told of a young Frenchman with desperate eyes, who had sojourned with them a few days. They had given him a clapper; and muttering his tragic cry, "Unclean," he had gone out again upon the road. There the clue ceased.

The days passed. Still at intervals, rather by night than by day, Pierre's voice called in John's heart.

He spent nights sometimes in the open, for spring advanced. Once he took refuge in an ancient Etruscan tomb, where solemn recumbent statues, gazing calmly at the noiseless flux of time, brought near an age forgotten. But when possible he returned at night to the Carceri, always welcomed there by Brother Rufino's quiet courtesy and illumined smile.

"He is not always like this," confided young Beppe. "Brother Rufino has moved much among men. All Assisi loves him."

And again, after a few hours' quietude, fortified by the sight of that still face, John would descend to the plain, and seek, and wander, and seek and seek in vain.

All the time, a curiously strong desire was growing in him to climb Monte Subasio, the mountain in whose clefts hung the Carceri, on whose flank Assisi nestled. Why wish to climb that lonely height? And most when Pierre's voice was clearest? He scolded himself, and day by day returned to the inhabited level. The central days of March arrived, and one morning he awoke into a strange consciousness: he was free to go up, not down — nay, he was powerless to do anything else. After all, said reason, seeking the Why of this necessity, there were refuges, churches, convents, higher up the mountain; these he had not searched.

It was not an auspicious morning in which this inner freedom urged him upward; it was singularly bleak and chill. Thick fogs, misting fine, swept in from south and west. Peering from out his cave in the Carceri, he saw them surge so thick that not only the distance but the ravine itself was submerged. He looked into blank chaos. Beppe, climbing up from Assisi, cautioned him against going out; the wind, it seemed, was fierce enough to blow a man off the road. There was an incredible tale of a sheep which had been caught bodily and rolled bleating down a sharp incline. Higher up, Beppe believed, no living thing could stand upright.

None the less, John was for the heights. His spirit as well as his flesh reached upward. And this was the

more surprising, for ever since his days at Saphro his impulse had been rather toward the depths, toward surrender rather than aspiration. But now something within was calling him to come up higher. Again, as in the ascent with Brother Bernard, he felt the miracle whereby forces dragging us to earth are defied, and one lifts one's own body unaided to upper levels. Health-giving, holy the effort, nor does the climber know any distinction between body and soul. Rather it is the very I that ascends, companion of the cloud, the bird.

Avoiding the wide tracks that curved exposed along the mountain side, John pushed straight up the ravine down which rushed the foaming yellow stream of the Carceri, swollen by the spring rains. Here the wind was endurable, though rushing vapors hid even the walls of rock rising on either side the narrow gorge. Exhilaration was in the climb itself, for outlook there was none, and the way hard — sliding shale underfoot, reaches so steep the foot spurned one instant what the instant before had almost been touched by the forehead. Soon all timber was left behind, except the few shivering thorny gorse bushes that peered over the cliff-edge weirdly through the fog, or sprang up here and there, puny and menacing, in the rough going.

And still the trail led up and up, till even John's stout young legs were wearied; and still the cruel wind drove him on from behind. Now and then, when came the edge of a sharper rise, he faced about, aware that the prospect should yield widening delights; but there was no prospect, only vacancy full of sinister

motion. The vapors whirled dizzily past. Dear familiar earth had vanished. What foolish phantoms lay concealed in that gray chaos down below! A Pope and an Emperor, contending; Uncle Philip in his monastery; Oxford, with Master Adam and Roger Bacon; the roads from Oxford to Paris, to Assisi; and Brother Thomas, down in Rome. He recalled them with difficulty. Space had swallowed them up, and time had gone also. What was this century?

Were the mists thinning a little? Yes. Suddenly, as he climbed, they divided before him. Rising into the blur, his direction appeared. He was ascending a high saddle; on either side rose huge mountain mounds, sombre and hostile. For an instant he discerned their mighty couchant masses, then they were gone, and again only the stony ground rose in front of him, rose as with difficulty toward a level line in the gray above. That too was gone — he moved again through emptiness.

What sounded in that swirling void? Melody? Notes fluted pure and clear, wavering, lost, resumed. A miracle? Yes, but not celestial. The notes were wild; they came from no Christian source; to John's bewildered ears they sounded as if from ages past, from a world unknown. They were far away — they were nearer —

He struggled on to the top of the pass. Again the mists parted, to show on either side a great horned hill. He stood on a flat plateau, not very wide, descending gently toward the north.

And in that quarter the glories of the world were restored. For the vapors rolling in from behind were no longer a shroud but a veil, and through that delicate veil gleamed range after range, rising mistily into a clearing sky where tracts of blue, washed as with weeping, shone clear. John, moving at his leisure down the slope, found welcome if partial shelter from the wind. It blew still, but gayly rather than fiercely now.

In the centre of a green marshy meadow, watered by many a limpid little stream, rose a small building of unhewn stone, evidently a sheepfold; and on the lee side of it huddled a large flock of goats. Near them stood a little goatherd, brown-limbed and lithe, who seemed of their close kin, for he was clad scantily in hairy goatskins, and his bushed black curls rose wildly to small points above his forehead. A reed was at his lips; it was his piping, sweet, uncertain, which had charmed John from below.

At sight of the gray-robed friar the lad started with affright and turned to run away, and all the goats scampered hither and yon over the turf, some of them leaping far up the rocky terraces which mounted on two sides from the pass. The sun, filtered through melting mists, illumined them now and then till they seemed elfin creatures touched with unearthly radiance. It struck full upon the little lad, weaving a halo of pure gold around his dusky curls. John, enchanted by the boy's grace and wild sweet music, held out coaxing hands; the child came nearer, listening, peered into

his face, took fright once more and ran, agile as one of his flock — then returned, and circled shyly closer and closer. Meantime, the goats, more fearless than their master, especially the little kids, approached dancing. One butted John, darted off, let himself be caught by the baby horns, curvetted around, sprang into the air, and leaped. The lad laughed shrill, and ran and leaped also. John chased him and the kid — it was a great game. He motioned the little fellow to raise the flute to his lips, and again the dulcet strains sounded clear, while the pretty creatures frolicked, almost it seemed in time and tune.

Something awoke in John that was not of Christendom. His whole life had been left behind, with all its joys, perplexities, and pains. He had traveled backward into an earlier, more simple state.

Hark! A voice — his name! It came from the sheepfold.

He was at the door. The little goatherd before him, with arms outspread, was barring the entrance and jabbering in distress. Of his patois John could understand one word only: "The leper! The leper!" Gently he pushed the boy aside, entered the gloom. Pierre lay before him on a bed of filthy straw.

X

FINDING

He was in the last stages of the disease. But the face was intact, except for the eyelids, perceptibly swollen, which rested on the wan cheeks. Eyebrows had fallen off; the effect was of a face sculptured on a tomb. Pierre was sleeping restlessly, and ceaseless moaning rose and fell with the rhythm of his breath.

John knelt by his side, and presently touched with his lips the ravaged hand which lay uncurled in the straw. Pierre's eyes opened — bloodshot, wondering. Welcome, love, relief, kindled in them. Then came another look, angered, repelling. He rose on his elbow.

"Go! Go instantly!" he cried, with a high nasal voice. "I did not call you! I never called you!"

"Oh yes, you did," John answered, laughing softly. He stood looking happily and sadly down on his friend. "I have been hearing you for weeks."

"It was in my sleep," faltered Pierre. "I resisted, always, when I was waking."

"But you desired me?" John asked gently.

"Does the parched desire water? Does the babe crave the mother's breast? But be the saints my witness that my dread was more than my desire." Pierre was shaking all over.

John glanced around. Beyond the entrance, sunlight was now shining brightly.

"This hut is the chilliest place I ever was in," said he in matter-of-fact tones. "I am going to carry you out into the sun."

Again Pierre repelled him with feeble energy. "Oh leave me, John!" he pleaded. "Will you add to my sorrows? I avoided you as soon as I feared my fate. Have I grieved you, fled from you, in vain — from you and from all men? I will endure my poisonous body. I promise you I will not curse God when I die — if only you will leave me alone with Him!"

"God has sent me back to you, in order that we may surrender us to Him together, according to His holy Will." John for the first time in his youthful life was possessed of a sense of authority which bore no scruples with it. He stooped, trying to gather Pierre's emaciated body in his arms, but Pierre waved him off with anguish.

"I can stand. I can still walk," he said, and tottered to his feet. But John's supporting arms were needed as he moved tremulously out into the light that now lay calm on the quiet pasture. The storm had passed, but the wind, though lessening, was piercing still. John, looking around for shelter, saw the goats comfortably huddled on the lee side of the fold. Driving

them off, he led his friend, now docile as a child, into perfect sunny warmth. Below them dropped the mountain; at its foot Assisi, very small, nestled among protecting hills. The vanishing mists blended, now with purple masses rich in shadow, now, southward, with the snows of the Sibilines. Pierre, half reclined in a hollow of the rock, looked off and up.

"I have something to tell, to make you glad," he said faintly. "I no longer see the earth or the flesh as evil."

A choking came in John's throat, for Pierre's body was poisonous as himself had said. But Pierre was gazing peacefully at the landscape.

"To me," said John, "has come perception of the pain all beauty hides. Have we changed places?"

"Beauty may needs be manifest through pain; for beauty is one with love, and pain, disease, and death can be love's sacrament." Pierre spoke with difficulty, panting a little. He turned his pallid face toward John. "Do you not believe me? But I know whereof I speak." He raised his two arms covered with sores. "'Thine arrows stick fast in me and Thy hand presses me sore. There is no health in my flesh, neither is there any rest in my bones. My wounds stink and are corrupt, through my foolishness, and my wickednesses are like a sore burden too heavy for me to bear. But Lord, Thou knowest all my desire. And in Thee have I put my trust. For Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God.'"

He sank back exhausted. "The psalm of the Passion

of our Lord," he whispered. "If death, disease, and pain are not needed to show Love, wherefore the Cross?"

"You shall teach me," said John humbly. And the friends were silent for a little.

"So blessed to be with you," said John presently. "But we always did forget everything else while we were talking. When did you have anything to eat?"

Pierre looked more startled than the question warranted. He passed his hand over his forehead. "I would eat now, if you would bring me something," he said faintly.

John looked around him. His eyes fell on the little goatherd. Withdrawn to a hillock where his disconsolate goats, driven away from their pet refuge, were gathered about him, he was watching the two friars with curious but friendly eyes. John had a happy thought. He ran to the boy, who skipped to meet him, pointed at his mouth, pointed at Pierre, pointed at the goats. And the little fellow laughed aloud, showing white teeth. He darted into the hut and emerged with two earthen vessels; then, swiftly capturing a full-uddered beast, he set to work, and the warm milk flowed into the pot. Triumphantly he filled a vessel and handed it to John, who lifted it to his friend's lips. Pierre drank eagerly and with solemnity.

"It was only yesterday that new light dawned, and I decided to break the Endura," he gasped. "John, do you drink with me — but seek another cup." John

obeyed, drank with his friend. And the warm milk was to him as Eucharistic wine.

Pierre, very feeble, now slept once more; and John looked around him. He found within the hut a mass of cloths, and occupied himself with washing them in a clear-flowing stream. When Pierre woke, he should be bathed; and now in this interlude John could consider.

His first instinct was penitent regret for those days of delay below. How long had Pierre, untended, lain in the sheepfold? Yet probably not long; and John recognized the leading of Love, which, using human sin to its own ends, had brought him here at the perfect moment. With wondering gratitude he found that the nausea which had inhibited him had disappeared. He had been sickened by anticipation and fancy. Now, face to face with reality, he found that reality was — Pierre! His friend, he perceived, was dying, and Love granted them to be together till the end. Nor did the presence of disease overwhelm him at this moment. Pierre's decaying body was poisonous to be sure; but his soul had found health. People were not their bodies!

John understood well the force of what his friend had said about the Endura. He knew, as he had hinted, that Pierre had never wholly escaped the taint of heresy. More than once the friar from Provence had mentioned with approval this practice, common among the Catari, of suicide, preferably by slow starvation, as death drew near. Was it not meritorious willfully to destroy that flesh which, as they believed, was not of

God but of the Devil? Pierre, John knew, had received the Consolamentum — or confirmation — of the Catari, when he was ill in the Orient. That was before he met Brother Cæsar, was healed by him, and drawn into the Franciscan family. And still, honest though he had been in his Christian discipleship, strange speculations had haunted him, and shadows had darkened his spirit from that specious creed to which the world of sense was the world of Satan.

Now John saw thankfully that his friend had come at last to the full Christian vision. The milk which they had taken together was a solemn token of faith in the Word made Flesh, in the sanctity of matter, and of submissive waiting on the Will of God.

John understood nothing about nursing, but he had watched Brother Gilbert at Exeter, and had heard the talk of more than one devoted brother privileged to care for lepers. He knew that caked and festering wounds craved to be bathed; and he pounded the dirty cloths with stones, chanting the fifty-first psalm to himself, till they were white, if not whiter than snow.

Pierre was awake, was speaking. John hastened to his side. And again Pierre urged him to withdraw, and again, when laughed at lovingly, abandoned himself to John's tender care. They did not say much. Pierre grew perceptibly weaker as the day wore on. But occasionally something pressed for utterance.

"You see," he whispered once, "I was so very wicked, John. It was not with a pure heart that I sought to set Brother Cæsar free." His voice died away.

John tried to help him. "It was because you hoped that he would heal you?"

Pierre's voice grew a little stronger. "Not at first. I think my love for Brother Cæsar alone made me seek leave from Brother Aymon to come with you. I was his spiritual son; I thought I might comfort him. But on the road, dread of — this, awoke and stung and tortured. And he seemed my only hope. I felt his healing touch, as once I had felt it. I set my will on his release, with defiance even of the Will of God. Do you think my sin was the reason we failed?" he gasped anxiously.

"Brother Cæsar is happy now. I know. I have seen him." John, usually so shy, told his vision without effort. It seemed the normal order of things up here. And Pierre listened, comforted.

"Perhaps I shall soon see him myself," he murmured.

Pierre at the point of death was still Pierre, a flaming heart, a mind insatiate. Later in the day it was evident that he was rallying his force to say something of great import. There had been an access of fierce pain, but at last quiet had been granted him again.

"The classroom at Paris," he whispered. "Brother Alexander of Hales — the student — who called — on the name of the Abbot Joachim!"

"At the moment when our eyes first met," John assented, his look fixed on the mountains swimming in noonday haze.

Pierre's hand reached out to him, then was swiftly

withdrawn; he still shrank from John's touch when possible.

"You remember what that student cried?" he asked; and there was special emphasis to his question.

"He said," John replied, "that the epoch of the Spirit drew near."

Pierre raised himself to a sitting posture. He spoke with great earnestness.

"John, he told the truth. You must believe me. One believes the dying. And — I know — not because he said it, merely. All through our journey I knew — what I dared not tell. I thought you were not ready. My own mind was confused. But now —" He sank back exhausted, presently to resume, as if to himself: —

"No heretic! No, no! A Catholic death! Joachim knew — The locusts of the Apocalypse — Yet my uncle — a holy man —"

John thought him wandering. But the next moment he raised himself on his elbow and spoke with prophetic fervor, as one having a burden to deliver, too awesome for the trembling flesh.

"Hear a great Mystery of the Everlasting Gospel, revealed by the angel bearing the seal of the Living God. Three ages there are. The first was the Age of the Father; then lived the patriarchs and prophets, ancient men; then were written the Scriptures of the Old Covenant; then were men living in starlight; then were they slaves and bound; then were winter and harsh nettles of the Law.

"And the second age is the Age of the Son. And Holy Church is His Body. And in this Age men know the joys of sons. Free men they are. They live in the light of dawn and springtime, and roses and grain grow on the fruitful earth.

"But the Age of the Spirit comes.

"It shall be the Age of liberty, the Age of plenitude. As little children must men enter there, reborn to a new life. Lilies and summer, high noon and perfect love. The contemplation of the Primal Beauty in its perfectness."

Pierre's voice sank again to a whisper, but not through weakness; for his person radiated an energy that thrilled John with awe, and he spoke as one imparting a wondrous thing: —

"Hearken! We, the sons of Francis, are the firstborn of that Age. The Lesser Brothers, reborn as littlest ones, we shall reveal the Spirit to the world. And this I think was not wholly clear to the holy Abbot Joachim, who lived before our time. But to me it has been made clear in a mystery.

"The knowledge of the past is the key to things to come. Ours is that Future Age. Soon shall the light shine clear. You, John, shall see it. Within twenty years shall it shine. Ours is the fellowship of that mystery. Dying, behold we live. But woe to us if we are untrue. Shall we keep ourselves unspotted from the world?"

Now exhaustion overcame him. The rosy flush which had bathed his face faded into deathlike hue.

But as he lay supine, almost inanimate, there was still a word that he must say.

"John!" he murmured, "You were really wrong to defend that church Elias built."

"I defend it no longer." John burned to assure his friend of their perfect union, nor did he doubt that he had received a message from on high. "I shall never defend it more. I too have learned. You led me to Brother Bernard, to Brother Rufino. I have cast in my lot with them forever."

Pierre in all his deadly weakness was radiant.

"Is it true? Is it sure? On the road I feared that you were of divided mind. You will not be beguiled by the sons of Belial?" The frailty of the flesh was forgotten. "Promise me! Promise me!" cried Pierre in his strange high voice. "Promise! Assert your faith!"

Words rose in John's heart, he knew not whence, though in fact they echoed phrases he had heard among his brothers. He stood, eyes fixed on those farthest snows on which afternoon sun was now shining. Among those snows seemed to open the long vista of the Christian future which Pierre had just revealed. But as an under harmony to the pledge demanded of him he heard the great words Pierre had just quoted from Joachim: "The knowledge of the past is the key to things to come."

"I believe in poor Christ Crucified. I believe that He, as far as He was mortal man and wayfarer, showed with His Apostles the Way of Perfection: that they

possessed nothing personally as by right and civil lordship, but for the use alone. And to this faith I dedicate my life."

"Poor Christ Crucified," said Pierre lifting his right arm to the sky, "give him grace to follow to the end."

That solemn night they lay out under the stars. The hut, very noisome, was left to the goatherd. John tried in vain to persuade the little fellow to rest elsewhere; he curled up contentedly in a corner. John brought out armfuls of straw to wrap around his friend, but it was cold, though windless. Pierre did not sleep. He lay still, his large eyes on the horizon, mysterious in the clear darkness. He murmured prayers.

"O Jesu my Saviour, Thou hast created me of the dust of the earth. Thou hast given me earthly life. Grant that I may turn to Thee at the Last Day."

It was the prayer always offered by a leper at the office which separated him from the world. His eyes now and then rested on John in the starlight, with utter trust and love.

John's memory traveled to another vigil under the olives, when, believing that Pierre cared for him no longer, he had renounced the greed of love. Behold! Love was restored fourfold. "We lose, to find" — the words rang through his mind. How blessed was his state! Yes, though the great separation was waiting.

The best help he could give must flow, he knew, from secret places; and earnestly he prayed that he might render strength and support to the dear one now so near

to the Last Adventure. But he became keenly conscious that the deep peace which possessed him flowed from Pierre to him, not from him to Pierre.

"The Age of the Spirit comes. It shall be the Age of liberty."

The morning brought its problems, for Pierre was very weak. He could no longer stand, and sensation had left his extremities. "The sacraments," he murmured. John debated with himself a hasty descent for help to the Carceri, but dared not go away. Torn in his mind, he had recourse to prayer, and felt, as befalls sometimes, that his prayer had power. Nor was he wrong; for over the edge of the pass he had traversed came two gray-frocked friars, Brother Angelo and — could he believe his eyes? — Brother Gilbert of Exeter.

"Truant!" called Angelo gayly. Brother Gilbert was all smiles.

"I am bound for Rome. I heard you were at the Carceri," he said. "I climbed to see you, only to learn that you had aped the goats and gone up the mountain. So, on the chance, I followed —" He broke off. "Trouble, my son?" said he.

John choked. He could not speak.

"I think he has found his friend," said Brother Angelo, very low. And John took Brother Gilbert by the hand and led him to Pierre.

Wisely, swiftly, tenderly the physician examined the sick man and ministered to him.

"It will not be long," he said, drawing the others aside, his eyes full of compassion. "The suffering will grow less as the loss of sensation spreads. But the end will not come, I think, for another day or two."

"The sacraments? A Catholic death for Pierre?" John could hardly speak.

Brother Angelo signified assent. "All shall be sent, if time but serve," said he, and started at once running down the mountain. Kind, practical brother!

Brother Gilbert remained with John, and before the end of the day appeared young Beppe with warm rugs and all needed for the patient's comfort. John and he cleaned the hut, purified it under Gilbert's direction with burning aromatic herbs, moved Pierre thither — this last John's privilege. By this time Pierre spoke with difficulty, but as a mass of old straw was carried out he signaled for it, fumbled feebly, drew out a parchment.

"Take!" His lips formed the words. "The Everlasting Gospel — the Age — of the — Spirit." And John received the roll with reverence.

He lay immobile, unconscious, his face carved as in alabaster, while that second night wore on. In the morning came Brother Angelo, with a young priest of heavenly countenance. Brother Pierre had a Catholic death. And as the holy wafer was placed between his lips, his eyes, unsmiling, opened wide on John.

"Poor Christ Crucified, grant him grace to follow to the end," said he, with voice already from beyond the grave. So, prayer for another on his lips, his soul passed into the Unseen.

They buried his poor body on the mountain, looking down to Assisi, off to the purity of distant snows. Over the earth the young priest said a prayer. The little goatherd, hovering wistfully, offered an armful of fragrant narcissus and soft golden cowslips. And John, with Beppe and the goatherd helping, built a rude cross of wood above the grave. The last thing John saw as he went down the hill was the boy, with his waving hair and brown young limbs, leaning against the cross and playing wild sweet notes on his flute of reeds.

"Bring me to my dead Christ. Draw me from sea to shore." That was rather the melody in John's heart.

"We will spend three or four days with Brother Rufino at the Carceri," said Brother Gilbert tenderly. "Then you shall come with me to Rome."

PART THREE

THE THREE HEAVENS

I

THE CENTRE OF CHRISTENDOM

It was when the purples of the Campagna gathered around them at dusk that John put his question.

"No one can tell," answered Brother Gilbert. "You are of sound constitution, John. It may be that you will escape. I, as you know, have been exposed repeatedly, like Brother Morico and others. On the other hand —"

"Yes? On the other hand?"

Brother Gilbert was not swift to answer, nor did John press him. He turned rather to the masses of stone, ivy mantled, that rose into the lonely sky on either side the road staring white beneath their feet. "What are they?" he asked abruptly. "Tombs? Or castles?"

Gilbert shrugged. "Castles of demons perhaps. People at times seem to inhabit them. But who unless demons would choose such abodes?"

"Phantoms perhaps. I think they were built by enchanters for phantoms," John suggested, shuddering. He braced himself.

"On the other hand? You were saying —"

"I will give you the exact truth. Concerning the contagion of leprosy nothing is known. Symptoms may appear in a few weeks or be indefinitely delayed. Watch for a tendency of the eyes to protrude, of the eyebrows to swell; watch for numbness in the limbs; watch —"

John checked him. "Enough! I traveled with Pierre from Paris." In constrained tones he added, "After what length of time may one feel secure?"

"Never." Brother Gilbert's voice was matter-of-fact, his eyes compassionate. "After long years of immunity the poison may act of a sudden."

John's eyes were bent on the horizon, where a wild figure of a shepherd with his flock enhanced the solitude.

They trudged on silently, meeting more traffic now. The low brown houses of Rome drew near. They passed within the gate in the Aurelian wall, only to find dreary country still prevalent within, vineyards and isolated farms. Everywhere a sense of space deserted, within which now and then rose some sinister fortified mass. Then, for a time, buildings, narrow streets, the stir of a noisy town, yielding once more, as they moved southward, to that worst desolation which marks lonely wastes in regions once consecrate to human life.

Brother Gilbert talked along cheerfully.

"They say that Rome was a clean city once, with a grand water-supply. Pah! Smell it!" He wrinkled his nose disgustedly. "The water is poisonous — it all comes from that muddy river you saw, the Tiber.

They keep it in tanks till the mud sinks to the bottom. Things used to be better in pagan days. Those big buildings we passed were baths then. Now they are dens for thieves and cattle-stalls. And scarce twenty thousand people in all this space, where once there were millions! But twenty thousand can make a lot of racket. What with the factions of the Church and the Emperor, and the jealousies of the barons, and the bad relations between the Pope and the citizens, there are quarrels enough — two to a man. You will find Rome lively. For my part, if once we can restore our Religion to its purity, I never want to look on her again."

John had not been listening — he was moving among ghosts and fears.

As they veered sharply to the left, an enormous circular pile loomed before them. "The fortress of the Frangipani — great allies of the Emperor," Brother Gilbert stated. "Our beloved sister whom Saint Francis called Brother Jacopa is of that family. I believe the building was once a theatre where holy martyrs were flung to beasts. Men call it the Colosseum, because it is so huge."

Before long they reached a widespread group of buildings, barely discernible in the dusk, among seemingly deserted fields. "The Lateran," said Gilbert, "of all churches head and mother. In that palace beside the church lives our Holy Father, Pope Gregory IX. Here he was consecrated. Hither, I have been told, came the great procession when he was made Pope twelve years ago. A wonderful day! Gregory was

covered with gold and jewels; the perfumed streets were hung with tapestries. There was waving of palms and strewing of flowers. Jews and Greeks followed him, chanting his praises in their respective tongues."

John shivered. "Strange that the April air should be so chill," he said.

Despite this harsh beginning, a homelike welcome awaited him in Rome, for he found himself again with the English group, and his heart warmed at the eager greetings of his old comrades. Among others was Brother Lawrence of Beauvais, John's first patron in the Order. His kindly eyes scrutinized his novice with affection that saddened.

"Did I not say to you that you should tread among thorns?" sighed he.

There was a new quality to John's smile. "Thorn trees have been in blossom all along the way," said he. "All is well with me, dear Father. Only — the days of my youth are done."

But Brother Thomas, coming up behind, looked further into his eyes than Brother Lawrence. "Happy are you!" he cried with a touch of passion. "Said I not that you should learn the Secret of Naughting?"

John shook his head slightly. "That great secret is not yet for me. But I have learned a little, dear Brother. I know that fuller life can be found through death. *Nudi, nudam crucem feremur.*"

"*Aspicientes in Jhesum,*" Thomas assented; and the two men felt their accord.

Now a new life began for Brother John. His personal emotions rested, blest and sad, near a high mountain grave, or bent over him, angel-wise, from Paradise. But his whole conscious being was merged in the life of the Order. For the shrinking he had felt from the affairs of the corporate life was gone, replaced by an impassioned longing that the sons of Francis might be worthy of the destiny to which they were called. His prayers for guidance in the Portiuncula, the decisive moment when he had joined those seeking to save Brother Cæsar, his weeks with Bernard and Rufino, had found their climax in the vow of consecration taken by the side of his dying friend. Scruples were put aside, spiritual selfishness was forgotten. He was of the party of the Zealots, or, as they began to be called, the Spirituals, and in order to serve their cause he suppressed aversion for that active life which had seemed to him inimical to the interests of the soul. The Order was facing the greatest crisis it had ever known, and John plunged into the politics of the hour.

If ever an issue were clear-cut in this muddled world, here was one now. Brother Elias was no fit leader for the family of Francis. To secure his deposition was an imperative duty. But oh, the intrigues involved!

It was Brother Thomas who initiated John into them, and that was well, for Thomas' aversion to intrigue at least equaled John's, and if embittered by the necessity, he was not tainted by it. So much could not be said of all the brothers. If there were diplomats on one side, there were fanatics on the other. If the

brothers of the lax observance shocked by their insincerities and self-indulgence, the Zealots too often repelled by sour intolerance and harsh eccentricities. So far as personal attraction went, John often found himself drawn to the courtesy and worldly wisdom, not to mention the practical common sense, of some brothers who clung to the party of Brother Elias.

But alas! A sharp sorrow befell him. For, "wearied out by contrarieties," he felt at times a distaste for all his brothers on both sides. Sad disciplines of forbearance threatened to replace the happy and trustful affection of his early days in the Religion. The men of his own party seemed as incompetent in their attitude toward reality as the men of the other side seemed evasive. Every temperament jarred on him. Wide-reaching aversion for his fellows grew acute. "Is it part of Naughting to lose your faith in men?" he asked himself sardonically.

Other struggles also fell to his lot in those days. Rome had its seething underlife. If the lure of the world centred there, so did the lure of the flesh; and nothing is so likely to make men respond to this lure as a mood of disillusion. The fumes of sense menaced John as they had done at Oxford. But it may have been wholesome for him to contend with so obvious an enemy. Those temptations of the flesh were a matter of course, and he conquered them, as thousands dedicated to the religious life had done through all the Christian ages. More subtle was that temptation to discredit other people; but against this too he

struggled, neither wholly victorious nor wholly foiled, helped to abide in purity and faith by making cheery fun of Brother Thomas' impulses toward cynicism, which were even stronger than his own.

In the complicated negotiations going on below and above ground between different factions, Thomas was especially valuable, from his joint connection with Britain and Italy. His Italian inheritance gave him subtlety, his Scotch blood directness and a canny insight; these traits were all needed. His intimacy with Brother Arnulf, the Pope's confessor, Vicar of the Order, was of great importance to the cause.

But nothing could make Thomas' personality ingratiating, and John, with his youth and charm and a sympathetic knack he had, soon became very useful. Quick at languages, he talked Italian fluently now, which was more than could be said of most of the Englishmen. His aristocratic origin, stamped on his bearing, may have had something to do with the respect he inspired. His trick of seeing two points of view, so discommoding to himself, was convenient and effective. Often he would catch his opponent's idea on the wing, and hand it back to him shining brighter. In this instinctive habit, native to quick imagination, he was too honest for his own comfort. It caused him a good deal of heart-searching and personal distress; but he became adept in the delicate task of combining sympathy for his adversary's thought with loyalty to his own. The result was a peculiarly refined diplomacy, and with some bewildered hearers

he gained an undeserved reputation as a man of the middle way.

Plenty such there were in Rome — so many that the mental life of the Order seemed at times a swirl of cross currents. Brother Aymon, in his zest for learning and fear of mendicancy, was representative of the temperate English group. His was the type John had so honored in Adam Marsh, a type far removed from that of Bernard and Rufino, with their simple, unconquerable ardor. Were these fine Englishmen quite exempt from a subtle form of the possessive passion, John wondered? Other opponents of Brother Elias were impelled by simple resentment at his despotic ways. And from all quarters of Christendom the gray frocks came hurrying, keen on that decision to be made at the general chapter at Pentecost, which should decide the fate of the Order.

Many of the most interesting men of the Order were there. Most of the Provincial ministers; Richard Rufus, an able lecturer from Paris; Brother Giordano da Giano, once of Spoleto, now Custos of Thuringia, who ran about taking notes. Feeling was high and hot, discussion endless. John talked with everybody, learning better and better the valuable and depressing art of understanding those from whom he differed. Much of the talk was personal. Horrified scandal gloated on the sins of Brother Elias; his defenders, conscious to exasperation of the services he had rendered the Order, were yet silenced by his outrageous doings. It was even whispered that he practised the Black Arts.

The great experiences of John's journey became augustly remote to him. He flung himself desperately before the tombs of the martyrs, praying for light in this distracting world. Was it his fault if the image of Brother Bernard's altar in the forest kept him nearer than all these tombs to the mysteries of Holy Church? Rome scoffed at him — Rome with her ancient memories, her present pettiness, Rome, centre of Christendom. He had told Brother Lawrence that his youth was over. Was Rome his manhood? Alien was her life, the life of the Church militant here below, to all that he had held sacred.

In swift revulsion he renewed his vow. "Poor Christ Crucified, grant me grace to follow to the end!"

Behind the scandals of the hour, always to John's mind lay that deeper matter — the right attitude of the Christian man to possessions. Property and power, property and power! Must they forever dominate men's lives? The sad and futile ruins which filled the Roman streets in their desolation spoke to him of a vast dominion which had perished, devoted to those ends. The release promised at Bethlehem had been realized by Francis. The Christmas singing which had stirred John's heart in the wintry woods of Cornwall still echoed within. Could not emancipation be complete? Francis had thought so. Brother Cæsar had thought so. Bernard and Rufino thought so still.

Alas! Rome gave that thought the lie, not only by her past but by her present. Who should control property? Who should hold power? Pope or Em-

peror? That was the great problem to the throngs who filled her streets with turbulent brawls. Pope Gregory had larger concerns on his mind than a split among the friars. One scant month before, on the twentieth of March, he had excommunicated the Emperor, — not for the first time, — and the city buzzed with dread, excitement, partisan passion. Of the great barons who inhabited the more available ruins, or had built themselves gloomy towers overhanging the narrow ways, some favored one faction, some another. Those of the Emperor's party, the Frangipani, the Colonna, were likely to come to blows any minute with the Orsini, who stood with the Pope. More than once John saw them slinging stones at one another in a sort of brutal tournament, in the lonely Campo Vaccino by the ropewalk under the great columns, where report had it that heathen Rome had settled public affairs. Bloody fighting and barbarous! How could a community absorbed in it do anything but laugh at peaceable gray-clad men, anxious to insist that no one who wore their habit should hold possessions?

Lady Poverty? No, no — Lady Property, Lady Power!

The Pope did not laugh. He loved his friars, had been since 1220, when he was Cardinal Ugolino and the trusted friend of Francis, their strong protector. Brother Thomas in a sardonic mood repeated what Father Philip had long ago told John in Cornwall, that Gregory regarded the mendicant orders as a sort

of free militia in his control, easily mobilized against the haughty ecclesiastics who held the upper hand in every country. No, he would not laugh; but he was distinctly annoyed at having to pay attention to them just now. He had so much on his mind — chiefly relations with the Emperor. For the last five years there had been peace between him and the Romans, but the attitude of the citizens was still sulky.

How to gain his ear? For April wore on, and it was essential that the Pope be convinced of the seriousness of the situation before the chapter met. He must be shown how heinous a thing it would be for Elias to remain Minister-General. All very well for the brothers to discredit him, — it was currently thought that a large majority would favor the deposition for one reason or another, — but that would be of small avail unless the mind of the Holy Father could be won to their side.

And the trouble was that Gregory was very fond of Brother Elias, with whom he had had excellent understanding even during Francis' lifetime, when as Cardinal Ugolino he had met the delicate necessity of curbing the irrational though holy ideas of the blessed saint — Elias, who had done so much to save the Order from chaos and to make it an available instrument in Papal hands.

His affection was misplaced. For Brother Elias, so persistent rumor ran, was, among his other iniquities, secretly addicted to the party of the Emperor. Just here John's chance for active service came to him.

Property and Power, Property and Power! The words rang through his ears.

To gain the ear of the Pope! An old, old man, who carried a heavy load.

Brother Thomas had drawn John into his frequent colloquies with Brother Arnulf. John liked Arnulf, not a shining person like Bernard and Rufino, or even like Adam Marsh, but a good and sensible man. Arnulf was the easy-going type always of opinion that difficult matters right themselves best by being let alone. On the whole, he sustained the Spirituals; it was thanks to him that the English delegation had reached Rome at all, for Elias had declared their original appeal illegal, and had tried to arrest them on the way. Actually, so late as the twenty-third of the last March, a papal bull had given Elias power to punish the Zealots. Brother Arnulf had circumvented Elias, and persuaded the Pope to receive the delegates. Yet, if he was on the whole sympathetic, his chief desire was to protect the Pope from annoyance. Gregory was almost a hundred years old and very frail; the conflict with Emperor Frederick was in an acute phase; not one irrelevant interest should be presented to him just now, if Brother Arnulf, who loved him dearly, could prevent it.

The Pope had told Brother Aymon's delegation, rather impatiently, to put their difficulties in writing and not to trouble him again. He had snubbed the German brothers, who had made independent protest. But Brother Arnulf recognized that, if Elias were really coquetting with the Emperor, it would be a most serious

matter, of which the Holy Father must be informed at once. Should definite evidence to this effect be forthcoming, he promised to secure an audience; nor was there much doubt that, in this case, the deposition of Brother Elias would be insisted on in the highest quarters. Therefore, much anxious debate in the English delegation. The discussion dropped to a level which shocked John's fastidiousness. Did not the Holy Father know that Elias violated the Rule of Francis shamelessly? And if Elias impudently claimed never to have vowed allegiance to that Rule, was he not obviously unfit to govern those who had? Or, if one must consider the matter on a lower level than this, there was his insolent invasion of the Brothers' liberties.

But no; by common accord, the policy proposed by Brother Arnulf was the only possible one. The Pope's confidence in Elias must be undermined at the point which affected the interests of the Holy See. Brother Aymon was strong for this method, not so much in open meeting, where he sometimes took higher ground, but — which made the matter worse — in private session. Aymon was aging visibly. The astute lines in his face were furrowed finer. He was still a good deal of an enigma to John. He now requested, with the note of authority native to him, that Brother Thomas devote himself to collecting evidence of Brother Elias' relations with the Emperor.

"Wise as serpents," sighed Thomas, talking to John. "Well, we have good authority for thinking that such

wisdom need not prevent us from being harmless as doves."

John was pacing restlessly up and down. "We are smothered in intrigue," he gasped. "Tell me, is there no true holiness in our Holy Father?"

Brother Thomas reflected. "I esteem Ugolino a truly consecrated man," said he slowly. "Even Emperor Frederick so thinks him. When he was made Papal Legate in Lombardy, Frederick summoned the public to rejoice because so devout and pure and honorable a person had been appointed. Many things he has done I like to remember, as when he wrote to Poland, bidding the nobles be merciful to their serfs and use them for other ends than caring for their falcons. And think how Francis loved him! At one time he contemplated assuming our habit."

"I fear I am glad he did not," was John's dry comment.

"We must be generous in mind toward one who carries the cares of State." Brother Thomas was speaking with unusual gentleness. "Gregory's one thought is for the advancement of Holy Church. His ideal for our Order is that we should serve that cause."

John groaned. "Does Holy Church advance through the control of property and the extension of power? Property and power — I esteem them the worst enemies of the soul. And of the two I am coming to think power the worst." He hesitated. "Brother, do you read the works of the Abbot Joachim?" he asked.

Brother Thomas disregarded the last question. He was looking troubled. "Power worse than property? Power wrong for the Church to wield? That thought would carry you far — into regions where I advise you not to peer. Now," he went on briskly, "our present business is to see how we can get that evidence against Brother Elias. And do not talk scruples to me, John. If that man is going over to the Emperor, he is betraying the Church, and on our faith in the Church our whole life depends. Decency demands that Elias no longer be our leader."

John could only agree, though he agreed sighing. "I think I might help in getting that evidence," said he.

On Brother Thomas' eager inquiry, he expounded his idea. It was to seek information through Brother Illuminato, Elias' secretary, who was always ready to talk freely to Brother Sylvester.

"A capital project!" exclaimed Thomas. "We will get Brother Sylvester to come to Rome at once."

Which was done; and John made no more scornful remarks about intrigue, consoling himself with reflections that men should be judged by motive, not by deed, and honestly scandalized at thought of disloyalty to Holy Church.

Brother Sylvester arrived, grumbling and cross, from his beloved Assisi, and easily fell in with the plan; he was not a man of fine-spun scruples, Sylvester. In due time he secured and triumphantly presented to Brothers Thomas and John the required evidence. Illuminato was not personally known to John. His

reasons for handing over certain documents could hardly be guessed; probably Brother Sylvester had not too obviously proclaimed the use to be made of them. Brother Illuminato was said to be a good deal of a gossip, and, moreover, everyone knew that he rejoiced in displaying the letters which Brother Elias received from the great of the world.

There were the documents — copies of correspondence which had passed between Brother Elias and the Emperor! Brother Sylvester, as one notoriously identified with the Zealots, was not the best person to present them to the Pope. Brother Thomas might have done so, but it was Brother John who had conducted the affair, and John, though he did not know it, was by far the more winning messenger. The appointed day arrived; and John, with Brother Thomas, for whose presence he had begged, was introduced by Brother Arnulf into the august presence of the Father of Christendom. He carried the letters in his bosom.

"You may have just seven minutes," Brother Arnulf had said to him.

II

THE FATHER OF ALL NATIONS

Old, old — surely coeval with those ruined columns which stood in the Campo Vaccino and always stung John to reverence as he passed by. So old, so wise, so weary, Pope Gregory! Unbowed by the weight of well-nigh a hundred years, he bore himself stately as those columns and with fewer signs of decay. Very tall, alert, clear-eyed, he dominated Christendom as the column dominated all left of ancient Rome; his was rather the dignity than the pathos of age. The firm skin of his face showed an infinitude of minute lines, cryptic register of past experience. The history of the Church Militant for ages past seemed written there. Through his pallor shone an almost physical light, not emanating, curiously enough, from his eyes so much as from his entire countenance. That a face could be so worldly-wise yet so illumined!

It was no merely formal act dictated by etiquette when John fell on his knees and kissed the ring on the Pope's extended hand. He felt himself in the presence of greatness.

He had shrunk from the interview, dreading to feel no awe when he should stand before the Vicar of Christ. Should he find in the Pope only an ordinary fellow man, to be reasoned with and perhaps to be convinced by appeal to his more ignoble motives? So he had feared; but the fear was instantly dissipated in Gregory's presence. It was to John as if he confronted Peter himself, the Head of the Apostolic College. In that bare room was concentrated the unbroken majesty of Holy Church. As a fervent Catholic, as a most humble son, he kissed that ring.

Gregory, who had the reputation of keeping men somewhat austerely at a distance, was doubtless aware of his humility.

"Young Brother John, of the noble Cornish house of Sanfort, is delegated to speak to you, Holy Father, concerning matters to come before the General Chapter of the Lesser Brothers, summoned to meet in Rome at Pentecost," said Arnulf, presenting him with formality.

The Pope's eyebrows flickered in surprise. "You knew, Father Arnulf, that I desired to hear only representatives of the Commission I appointed. And I stipulated that they be mature and discreet." The whispered tones represented the least possible expenditure of voice.

Arnulf, flushing, started to answer the rebuke, but Gregory, who had been scrutinizing John, checked him, though without increased stress of voice.

"Since you are here, speak, but be brief." There was a hint of a smile in the Papal eyes. "Do not behave

like the Saxon brothers, and Brother Giordano da Giano, who insisted on pulling my foot out of bed and kissing it."

Brothers Arnulf and Thomas waited. The Pope waited. And John said never a word. For the first time in his voluble young life, speech failed him utterly.

Time flowed silent by. "Seven minutes!" That was the only idea in John's agonizing and inhibited brain. Brother Thomas shook his arm, pinched him, none too gently. Brother Arnulf frowned. The Pope waited. John, dumb as a fish, piteous, raging within at his own impotence, stared at that old, waiting face.

Of a sudden the Pope laughed, a noiseless laugh, and began to speak himself, with evident relish.

"None of you young men remembers when I brought Brother Francis to see Pope Honorius; it was more than twenty years ago. I like to recall the occasion. It was the day when at Francis' request I was made Protector of the Order. Well, he had learned his speech by heart, and I had drilled him in it and heard him repeat it till he was letter-perfect, for that was an important interview and I was anxious. And when we were in the presence of the Pope, Francis became tongue-tied, just like this young man."

He took a step toward John, laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "I am sure you learned your speech by heart?"

John nodded, shamefaced.

"Forget it." Gregory let his resonant voice ring out with authority. He paused a moment. "Now!

Talk to me! Am I not your father?" There was indescribable sweetness in his tone. With a gesture he dismissed Arnulf and Thomas, who withdrew to the embrasure of a window.

"Father! Father of all Christendom!" cried John. His mission concerning Brother Elias' dealings with the Emperor had completely vanished from his mind. "Father! You whom the blessed Francis so dearly loved, you whom he gained for the Protector of our Order — Protect it! Ordain that Francis' sons shall follow his perfect will!"

"What hinders?" said the Pope — and apparently meant what he said.

"What hinders? This terrible world, which smirks at us and forces us to deny poverty if we would fulfill love; which bids us say 'mine' in our own despite. What hinders? Our own hearts, which betray us. What hinders? Our blind guides." John's voice trembled.

Pope Gregory groaned. "Can I alter human nature?" said he.

"You can help us to be born anew. Why else are you Priest and Pope? Our weakness craves your help. But, Holy Father, you too hinder instead of helping. You wish us to possess convents, to build fair churches, to hold goods through trustees, to seek security. You have told us that the last Will of Francis is not binding, and you bid us ignore and deny what he said should be obeyed without gloss, without gloss, without gloss!"

It was lucky that Brother Arnulf and Brother

Thomas were out of hearing. John caught his breath, but continued pouring out his words with passion: —

"Did you help Saint Francis? What pierced the wounds in his limbs and side? What save his fear that under your influence the brothers had lost their pure fealty to Lady Poverty?"

As the young friar spoke, he was conscious of that little tingling he sometimes felt in his own palms. The Pope was not offended by his audacity. He was visibly searching his heart. He and John, as sometimes for very brief moments happens by the grace of God to poor mortals, were transported together into the sphere of reality.

"Look you!" Gregory's tones, though low, were charged with power; he was fully alive. "Look you! Francis sought to live on earth by the law of Paradise. But entire obedience to that law is not granted yet. What sustains us, strangers and pilgrims here, as we press forever toward it, seeking the fair Vision of Peace? What bears unfailing witness to that law amid the disharmonies of earth? What but the Church, our Mother! She and she alone moves human hearts to seek that far-off day when poverty may be fulfilled in fellowship. Slowly she works, but surely."

He paused, transported by religious passion, and resumed: —

"To defend Holy Church, to preserve her, is my appointed task. Long task and hard! Heavy burden for this aged back to bear! I looked abroad and there was none to help. Then was Francis the beloved,

then was Dominic, raised up of God to provide me an army that should aid in this great task. And well I understand the vision of my predecessor, when he saw this Lateran Church, of all churches Head and Mother, upheld, when ready to fall, by the feeble form of Francis. I thank God for the Religion. But to serve Holy Church it must be marshaled, it must be sober, it must learn to live in the world it would save."

John was brooding. "Do the wars between you and the Emperor help the quest for the Vision of Peace?" he wondered.

The Pope raised his head haughtily. "Yes!" he answered with assurance. "That insolent man, endued with power from Hell, has continually encroached on the territory of the Church. He has flouted her authority. He wins men to himself by all seductive arts which betray them to their endless death. Our excommunication rests upon him; with the arm of flesh we shall resist him. The Church is militant here below."

Now was the time when John might with good effect have produced his testimony against Elias; but his thoughts were traveling upon another road.

"Shall the Church then adopt the behavior of those Evil Powers which menace her? Are her weapons carnal, despite the word of the Apostle?"

Gregory did not answer.

"Holy Father," John was speaking very quietly, "what if the Church were to be crucified with her Lord?"

Gregory passed his hand over his brow.

John felt power within. He drew a roll from his bosom. Brother Thomas and Brother Arnulf stirred; they thought that he was at last presenting the documents proving the treachery of Elias. But of that matter he was still not cognizant. The parchment which he handled was that given him by Pierre at the point of death.

"The thoughts of the holy Abbot Joachim: 'Behold, I make all things new.' This day — says he — is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. The Age of the Patriarchs is done; the Age of the Church as it has been draws to an end. The Age of the Spirit dawns — the Spirit of the Living God. But before that Age may be realized, Holy Church must die, to live."

The Pope interrupted. His temperature had cooled. He was evidently impressed by John's personality, but somewhat bored by what he was saying.

"I am aware that you Englishmen are much affected by the writings of the Abbot Joachim," said he courteously. "Even the Bishop of Lincoln holds them in high esteem."

John paid scant attention. He was bent on pouring his own mind into the mind of Gregory, and he succeeded as he went on, thanks to the zeal which burned in his eyes, in his speech.

"What Joachim never dreamed was revealed to me by dying lips. Just and true are Thy Ways, O king of saints!

"Saint Francis Innovator! Through Francis speaks Christ who makes all things new. We, children of

Francis, are the sons of the New Age. Ours it is to usher in that reign of the Spirit. Knights of the Holy Ghost are we; who knows that this very Whitsuntide, the Spirit's festival, shall not be the hour when the new life shall overflow the Church? The Religion of Francis is the soul of the Church to be!

"Why? Because we die to live. Because we renounce even to the uttermost the lust for property and power. We may not affirm our own essence, like the Orders of former days. I fear we may not pursue learning or the arts. I know we must not strike compromise with security or seek reason at the expense of love. The world shall count us mad. Crosswise we live. You would have us shape our ways as citizens in the commonwealth of the visible Church, and serve her temporal ends. No! We are strangers and pilgrims, citizens of that true Jerusalem which is in verity the Vision of Peace: and you say sooth that even here and now we would follow her laws only. You bid us wait; there are those among us who cannot wait, who would spring with Christ to the Cross, who would love to the uttermost. Holy Father, we would follow the Gospel Rule as Francis followed it. But you and Brother Elias will not let us."

Gregory had listened, no longer bored or weary; once or twice John had felt the Pope's emotion thrill through the quiet room. But he did not speak, only moved abruptly, and for a moment stood with his back to John, facing a crucifix on the opposite wall. When he spoke, his words were a disappointment.

"I cannot imagine," said he, "why the Brothers are so discontented with Brother Elias."

Here surely was the point to produce the incriminating evidence; but again John did not remember it. He had fallen into dejection, due to his apparent failure to bring the Pope within his sphere of thought.

Gregory went on: "Of course I am aware that Elias is not much of a friar himself. Love for Francis rather than for the ideas of Francis constrained him. He is not keen for poverty, as anyone who has dined with him knows. But his provisions for the Order are wise, necessary, and sane." There was more than a touch of defiance in the tones.

"Necessary?" said John scornfully, "even when he throws our holiest into prison? Even when they die, martyred by his will?"

Gregory was unexpectedly roused at last. He looked more troubled than at any point during the talk.

"Father, how can you demand that we rest under the rule of a man who caused the death of Brother Cæsar of Spires?"

Gregory's trouble mounted. He was disturbed beyond reason or measure. "How do you know that Cæsar did not deserve his death?" he questioned. "I have understood that, though a good man, he made much difficulty in the Order." He bent forward eagerly, with a curious air of suspense; he clutched John's habit. "Did you know him personally?"

"I saw him in the flesh once only, at the hour of his death," John answered gravely.

Still this unaccountable agitation on Gregory's part. "For me, I never saw him. His face — describe him!" The whisper was barely audible.

John rallied a sacred memory. "Holy Father, how can I tell what is too deep for words?"

"Angelic beauty?" asked the Pope.

"No. Are angels' faces furrowed deep with torture? Brother Cæsar's face was not that of an angel. It was greater. It resembled the face of the Christ Himself, as wrought by artists of the East in the apse of these Roman churches. Pain marked it, and the majesty of love."

Gregory was not satisfied. "Aye, aye," he mused. "But can you tell me no more? What did you mean by saying that you saw him once only in the flesh?"

John hesitated. Only to the dying Pierre had he spoken of his vision. But Gregory's will vibrated through his own.

"I saw his soul ascending to Heaven," said he.

Gregory heaved a great sigh, and waited.

"It was the same face, but — ah! the rapture! In those weary eyes was the dawn of everlasting youth. Yet strangely the marks of the flesh were still there. Our soul and flesh — are they more one than we know?"

Pope Gregory drew John close. "And was there a scar, long, crooked, down the side of the cheek?"

John was startled. "Yes — the left cheek. I marveled. Holy Father," he gasped as the Pope and he peered into each other's eyes, "I believe you saw him too!"

Gregory was quivering. His face was happy, solemn, struck with dread.

"Yes, my son, my brother, I beheld him. My unworthy eyes beheld that ascending soul. But how should I know that it was Brother Cæsar? When the news came of that death, I wondered; but I cast the wonder from me. For many there be released on each instant from the flesh, and could I tell whose soul God had seen fit to show me? Nor, to tell truth, was I desirous to believe my vision was of Cæsar."

"I heard his voice," John volunteered. "He was praying for Brother Elias."

"The name of Elias I did not hear. But I heard him say, 'Lord, lay not this sin to his charge.'" And after brief silence, the Pope added with effort, as one compelled to honesty, "The angel who bore that soul aloft told me that I must render account of it to God at the day of my death, in that it had died for the purity of the Rule."

John looked gravely at the Pope without speaking.

Brothers Arnulf and Thomas, a little awed, greatly curious, aware that something unusual was occurring, waited in the embrasure of the window. Presently the Pope summoned them. He was himself again, the Head of Christendom.

"Brothers," said he, "irresistible evidence has been brought to me in regard to Brother Elias. God be witness that if my heart has not been very open to the wrong doings of my friend and counsellor of many years, I have at least meant to keep an open mind. But now

I have been shown beyond doubt that he is enemy of the friends of God. I shall await the judgment of the Commission of Twenty. But if, as I have reason to surmise, it proves unfavorable to Brother Elias, I shall demand his deposition, for I am convinced that he should no longer be your Minister-General."

Gregory was once more the Supreme Pontiff, John the abashed young friar. From that strange realm of inmost reality where they had sojourned together wondering for a little while, they had emerged into the usual life of the outer world.

"You won; but you never even showed him the letters!" exclaimed Brother Thomas, when the three were out in the street. The interview had lasted almost an hour.

"I forgot them," John answered apologetically. "But you saw yourself that the Holy Father required no such testimony. Much given me to say to him he would not receive, but his mind works on too high a level to be affected by such letters as those."

"Yet he said that you had given him evidence," ventured Brother Arnulf. But John did not respond. Of what had passed between himself and the Pope he never to his last day brought himself to speak.

"He is indeed, as Saint Francis called him, the Bishop of all Christendom; he is the Father of all nations. He is a great man. Yet is he not the Bishop of the Church to be?" John murmured. And neither Brother Thomas nor Brother Arnulf dared ask the meaning of this enigmatic saying.

"Give me the documents you had from Sylvester," said Arnulf dryly. He turned to Brother Thomas. "I will take good care," said he in an undertone, "that Gregory reads them before the chapter meets." But neither brother dared rebuke John, who walked along abstracted, with that light from Elsewhere in his eyes.

III

THE FALL OF BROTHER ELIAS

"*Tu, rex, cogitare coepisti in strato tuo, quid esset futurum post haec: et qui revelat mysteria, ostendit tibi quae ventura sunt.* (As for thee, king, thy thoughts came upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass.")

Such was the text, drawn from Daniel's story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which Pope Gregory announced with resonant voice as he opened with a sermon the Pentecostal chapter of the Lesser Brothers, in 1239. A notable occasion. For seven years Brother Elias' neglect to call a general chapter, even though in refraining he had kept to the letter of the law, had been bitterly resented. Now from all over Europe the gray frocks had come to Rome. Gathered out of every nation and kindred, they thronged the streets, eclipsing the black-and-white sons of Dominic, almost submerging the normal inhabitants, anxiously attendant, one and all, on the crisis in the Order. To the chapter meeting itself, which only a minority could attend, no true

dignity was lacking. In mean array, girt with the cord of holy poverty, the delegates represented a large proportion of what was most noteworthy in the spiritual and intellectual life of Christendom.

John sat far to the rear, a modest figure, counting himself lucky to be there at all. He thrilled to the occasion, thrilled to the text. For a moment he believed that Gregory had caught fire from his own flaming vision of the future — of that dawning epoch of the Spirit wherein the sons of Francis should be the soul of the Church to be.

The Pope's great voice surged through the place, a tide of sound in which all hearts were swayed, and he preached a noble sermon, which gave joy to the opponents of Brother Elias. Brother Aymon, Brother Bernard, Brother Giordano da Giano, and others, signed gratification to one another with eagerness as he proceeded. But he did not satisfy John, for the mysteries revealed of which he spoke pertained to the past, not the future. He gave a mystical interpretation of the passage from Daniel. The King was Christ Himself, the bed on which he lay, the Holy Cross. And what was the image, golden above, with feet of clay, but the Order of the Brothers Minor? Sad the descent from Saint Francis, head of gold, to dark and brittle earth. Gregory mentioned no names, but many stern, reproachful eyes were turned to Brother Elias. He sat, the Minister-General, perfectly impassive, his lips pinched, his yellow, bearded face haughty and still. But the Pope was not thinking of one man alone.

Sorrowfully he dwelt on the degeneration he had witnessed in years how few, how brief — he who had been with Francis! His convincing eloquence grew tender as he spoke of that illumined life, that great example. Let the brothers lay their dissensions aside, and return, purged from corruption, to the sincerity of early days! As he closed with a fiery appeal for renewal of the pristine poverty and love, tremors passed over the assembly. That was a great sermon!

Why was John left cold and sad? Because he felt assured that no memory of a past, however glorious, could impel men to renew their life; only a vision of the future had that potency. And Pope Gregory, fine statesman and devout, had it not in him to behold or impart such vision. How great the opportunity he missed! John was moved through his whole being by the august gathering, by the potential greatness of the hour. Pentecost — the Festival of the Holy Ghost! Had not the Order convened at this time in obedience to a hidden summons? Might not this very day, as he had hinted to the Pope, be the birthday of that new life which the Lesser Brothers were to minister to the world? Why look forever back? Christ was the Father of the Future Age. The Religion of Francis! The soul of the Church to be! Those words haunted him like a refrain.

Phrases were running through his mind from his cherished pamphlet of Joachim. He saw, not the image with feet of clay, but the great Angel of the Apocalypse, ascending from the sun-rising, bearing the seal

of the Living God. Might not that angel be Francis himself? Should not the seal be opened?

John knew that the writings of Joachim were earnestly studied among the doctors, and that others beside Pierre were making applications undreamed of by the Calabrian abbot. Gregory, as he had felt, was not of the prophetic school. It was left for John himself to pursue thought into "what should come to pass."

His outer mind followed the sermon, his inner, as often happens to swift imagination, listened to God or fancy preaching a different sermon from the same text. "*Quae ventura sunt!*" Rapt in exaltation, he beheld his beloved Order as it should be when once the poison was ejected — free from all thought for the morrow or burden of worldly care, purged from the acquisitive curse. Perfected in the divine paradoxes, it should repudiate the world by embracing it, till "mine" should yield to "ours," till private property should cease to allure. As having nothing and yet possessing all things, it should inherit the earth by virtue of meekness and of holy poverty. And in that era of the Spirit which might even then be dawning, should not the whole Church, nay the whole converted human race, be brought to flee that covetousness which is idolatry, to renounce the proprium, to learn that life must be lost ere it can be found? John felt the life of the great mass, in which all thought of his own personal life was merged. The consciousness of power which a crowd can give a sensitive man possessed him.

A wondrous sight, these rumoring throngs, sworn votaries of Lady Poverty, gathered here in the city of the Cæsars, amid the ruins of man's pride!

Many elements conspired to produce John's mood of exaltation. First, the austere release from personal preoccupations, which is the fruit of deep sorrow in a Christian soul, had set him free for absorption in larger destinies. Next, his sojourn among the decayed majesties of imperial Rome had kindled in him the historic sense, forcing him to recognize that ceaseless flux of life which ever leaves the past behind, ever bears men on to a new future. Now the marvelous spectacle of that great brotherhood dedicate to poverty, of which he was a part, completed the work. A mighty rushing wind, like that of Pentecost, blew from the past, and drove his spirit with compelling force toward those things which should be hereafter.

But the sermon was ended; conference had begun. John was caught back to the present. He listened, breathing inward prayers for the intercessions of Francis the Innovator, sustained by the sense of a great Becoming, of a new life entering the world. The Order must be reformed before it could help either the Church or the human race, and the first step must be the deposition of Brother Elias — step immediately essential. Habitually restive under practical detail, John was able for once to focus his full attention on a concrete point — not a point easy to gain, for Elias and his adherents did not propose to be put down without a struggle.

Only once before John had had a glimpse of Brother Elias. He had seen him on the morning of Brother Cæsar's heavenly birthday, riding into Assisi on a richly caparisoned horse, attended by gay pages. Now he viewed with amazement the small, spare, dark-faced man, and scanned the taciturn countenance, vainly seeking some sign of what had held the love of Francis.

The first action of the chapter, now called to order, was to receive the report of the Commission of Twenty. And an explicit document it was.

"We accuse that General-Minister Brother Elias of having many horses; of supporting servants; of violently demanding pecuniary contributions from the brothers; of forcing them by severe punishments to gather monies and collect great treasures. We accuse him of paying no attention to the Rule, for he seems rather to aim at the destruction of it. Wherefore, Holy Father, since he is no shepherd, but rather a destroyer of his Order, we cannot endure his wiles; and we reverently say to your Holiness that we have recourse to Holy Mother Church for a remedy."

While the report was read, low groans mingled with hisses ran through the assembly. Now someone rose, conferred with Elias, urging him — as was later ascertained — to proffer his resignation. He obviously refused what was suggested, with mounting anger. John's eyes meanwhile roved over the room, catching now one face and now another.

There was the pure-cut profile of Brother Rufino, looking less imparadised than at the Carceri; there, near by, the noble head of Bernard; there the sensible, kindly countenance of Sylvester. Brother Albert of Pisa, provincial minister of England, was across the room. The serious-faced delegation from Germany, witnessing, John thought with a sigh, to the fine work done in that country by Brother Cæsar of Spires, was headed by that Brother Giordano da Giano who had pulled the Pope's foot out of bed to kiss it. Brother Giordano had been Cæsar's friend; he looked a very human person. One Thomas of Celano sat with them, who in 1229 had prepared a Life of dear Father Francis; he too had been in Germany with Brother Cæsar. There was a group of dark and fervid Portuguese, probably brought into the Order by that Brother Anthony, later of Padua, who was said to be even a greater miracle-worker than Brother Francis. Brother Anthony had been canonized in 1232, only a year after his death. There were the famous doctors from the University of Paris, acute-faced men of academic type, Alexander of Hales, John of Rochelle. They lent dignity to their tattered habits; leaders they already of the intellectual life of Europe. And there, sitting undistinguished among the English delegation, sat Brother Aymon, an insignificant figure toward which many eyes were turned. He sat, his head buried in his hands.

And ah! Those present brought the absent to mind. Were they not present too? John's imagination saw

them all: the beloved countenance of Adam Marsh; his own friend Brother Richard of Devon, with his worn and saintly glee; Roger Bacon, who, so Brother Gilbert had brought word, was almost ready to be professed. And persistently recurring, the celestial face of that young Brother Bonaventura, seen in Paris in the lecture room of Alexander of Hales. Nay, the dead were there. Clear as in a daylight more intense than that of earth, shone before John's inner sight the face of his Pierre, of Brother Cæsar. Ah, the glorious Order! Ah, the soul of the Church to be!

With few exceptions, all heads were bent in grave and sad assent as the reading of the Report was ended.

And now Brother Elias rose to reply. He was a brilliant man at bay. Brother Cæsar's first act, when released from the body, had been prayer for Elias' soul. John tried to follow Cæsar's example, but felt inhibited. The man emanated vigor, but something in his personality rendered credence easy in that report that he practised the Black Arts.

And John wondered at his speech. Astute in its way, it would convince no one not convinced already. For Brother Elias did not rest his case on his services to the Order, on his great work of organization, his missionary zeal, his furthering of learning — ignored all this, as indeed the accusers had deliberately put these matters to one side. Perhaps he thought that mention of them would come more gracefully from other lips than his. At all events, what he proffered was a purely personal defense. "Holy Father," he said, in effect,

"when the brothers wished to make me Minister-General I excused myself, declined the office, because I am feeble of body, and I cannot go on foot or endure the austerities of the Order. For that matter," — he was speaking with insolent assurance, — "I cannot see that anyone is bound to obey the Rule of 1223, which is a *regula non bullata*, has never obtained the Papal sanction. I held back from being minister with all my power. Then by common assent," — he faced the audience, defiant, — "by common assent, the general chapter agreed that I might eat gold and have all the horses I would, if only I would govern the Order."

He spoke truth, John knew. Well he recalled the familiar story of that chapter, often told him by those who had been present. The disgraceful scene when the adherents of Elias had burst vehemently into the room, bearing him in their arms, and had deposited him with clamor on the seat of the Minister-General! And John Parenti, that good, feeble man, weeping — he had the gift of tears — and tearing off his habit, had abdicated and fled.

But Elias was continuing: — "Horses to ride as I would? Gold to eat? Holy Father, a horse requires a servant boy, and a servant must have money if his needs are to be met. How otherwise? And that I might do all this with a clear conscience," — here he looked significantly at Pope Gregory, and threw his voice, charged with reproach, out into the room, and Gregory stirred a little uneasily, — "that I might do

all this with a clear conscience, I had recourse to your holy seat. For I desired to act in accordance with the intention of Saint Francis, which I knew privately, and which you, Holy Father, knew something about. I had to provide for that basilica of yours," said Brother Elias, folding his arms, "as well as for the needs of the Order."

He sat down, imperturbable still. After a moment of silence, a chorus of groans arose and swelled. Yet there were brothers, affected by his assured bearing, by his facile speech, and by his implication of Papal connivance to his policy, who nodded assent. None seemed disposed to reply.

Several guests were present, following the proceedings with care. One of them, Cardinal Robert de Summercote, now rose and demanded the floor for Brother Aymon of England. In high excitement, Brother Elias sprang to his feet, began an angered protest. But Gregory imperiously waved him down.

Slowly, painfully, from his obscure place among the Englishmen, Aymon rose. And suddenly it seemed to John as if the whole assembly except these two men had disappeared. Reality was centred in their two encountering souls; he felt them intensely aware each of the other, while the lonely spaces of eternity, as it were, encompassed them. At the same time the acute alienation which he had experienced in regard to Aymon vanished. In its place, on the contrary, he was conscious of a passion of pity. He was in the naked presence of the man's soul, and it was a soul ravaged

by anguish. For Brother Aymon's soul was bound to the soul of Brother Elias by the bands of love. Blessed were they whose beloved were safe in the healing pains of purgatory.

Brother Aymon was trembling visibly as he began to speak, but his voice, though at first very low, was incisive and audible. The accent was sardonic. The words, sharply clipped, dropped each separately into a pool of silence.

Holy Father, even if it were granted Brother Elias to eat gold — as a mode of speech — in view of his peculiar necessities, it was not and could not be granted that he should accumulate a treasure. And if it were allowed him to have a horse, did that mean that he should own palfreys, despoil his Order, force his brothers to violate their Rule? Were they to collect wealth for him, that he should be enabled to lead, not the life of a Brother Minor but of a great secular prince, eating delicate food served in rich utensils by a train of servants? For thus did he live. Nor would Aymon speak of his tyrannous ways, imposing cruel and unwelcome burdens on the brothers, or of his alleged favoritism in the appointment of officers. He rested his case on the personal life of Brother Elias: a life under no regular discipline, a scandal to the Order and to the profession of evangelical poverty. "Shall such a man govern the family of Francis? For such, O Holy Father, is his life and conversation."

So Aymon paused. And his eyes and the eyes of Brother Elias met for a long moment.

It was a short speech. It contained nothing that had not already been stated. Perhaps the impression it produced was due to the personality of the man who made it, to the stern pathos of his shabby figure, to the common knowledge that Brother Aymon had been Elias' near friend and warm defender. To the same reason probably was due the special rancor shown by the Minister-General. For as Brother Elias gazed at Brother Aymon, his dark face became fiery red. Silence obtained for a moment. Then, shaking off the restraining hands of the brothers who were near him and mindless of Pope Gregory's frown, he sprang to his feet, sought to rush forward.

"You lie! You lie!" he shouted.

Consternation and tumult. The assembly was in an uproar. Had demons broken loose? Brothers yelled, shouted, shook fists in one another's faces; personal encounters were not lacking. Dignity and forbearance forgotten, these gray-frocked men girt with the cord, many of them mature in years, men of note and position known often over all Europe, were brawling like the Orsini and the Frangipani, advocates of the Pope and the Emperor, in the streets of Rome or in the Campo Vaccino.

Pope Gregory's great voice rang out over the racket. He stood, the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ, every inch the ruler of men. Anger and grief contended in his features.

"Is this the Religion of the Little Poor Man? What must I hear? What must I see? Shame on you!

Brothers — peace!" His voice pealed, vibrating with authority. His arm was extended.

"Silence! Silence for half an hour!" proclaimed Pope Gregory.

And silence fell. Obedient, abashed, those angry disputants sank back, every man in his seat. Tense enough that silence, but unbroken. And John, sitting crouched, his eyes half closed, meditated in ironical pain on his great vision of the future. The Order of Francis! The soul of the Church to be!

The half hour was over. It had seemed to belong not to time but to eternity. Again Gregory rose to his full majestic height. All hung upon his words. Very slow they came, and clear, dropping with even emphasis.

In appointing Brother Elias as Minister-General he had thought to conform strictly to the wishes of the brothers. It was now evident that this minister pleased them no longer; therefore he, Pope Gregory, by virtue of the authority reposed in him, did formally and absolutely from this moment depose Brother Elias from his charge. And the brothers should at once, when the session resumed on the morrow, proceed to the election of a new Minister-General, — here many glances sought Brother Aymon where he sat in his place, a little heap with hidden face, — to the election of a new Minister-General and to the reshaping of their constitution.

How deep the sigh that heaved through the great meeting! How unrestrained the joy that now broke forth! Men embraced each the other with streaming

tears. The champions of Elias slunk noiselessly away. Elias himself had vanished. Ecstasy and triumph were the order of the hour. "When Israel came out of Egypt," a group near John were singing the psalm, with voices suffused by emotion.

IV

FEARS AND HOPES

Brother Thomas and John walked out together. The streets swarmed with friars among whom the great news had spread. Delight was in every countenance. The Order kept festival. Even the sober Thomas was in buoyant mood. His step was light; his face broke into smiles as he accosted brothers known and unknown. "A great day, Brother. Brother, peace be with you. Brother, this day has peace returned to our House."

John paced beside him, silent and morose. Brother Thomas cast troubled glances at his friend.

Brother Lawrence of Beauvais came hurrying by. Catching sight of them, he threw his arms around John, saluted him on both cheeks.

"My son! What happiness to meet you here, and now!" He spoke with an expansion of manner such as he had never shown in England. "Do you remember the midnight mass in your castle chapel in Cornwall?"

Well John remembered.

"And we told what had been revealed to us — to you, and to Brother Richard, and to me," Brother

Lawrence continued. "You and he were elate. He had seen you kneeling beside him at the Portiuncula. As for you, you had had a revelation of which you would not speak, but its glory shone in your eyes. Only I was sad; for to my ears had risen and fallen the rumors of an approaching storm, and its shadow swept over my spirit. That storm has come; it has passed. Its black wind blasted the pleasant plants of our Order. Now radiant calm and light return. Once more our wilderness of poverty shall blossom as the rose. *Laus Deo!*"

"Is there ever a last storm?" John questioned, unresponsive and sullen.

Brother Lawrence moved away, looking grieved, and Brother Thomas spoke sharply. "What is the matter with you, John?" he asked.

John's lips were tight. "There is none that doeth good, no not one," he muttered between his teeth.

"We must talk!" And Thomas led him up a little height where ruins of the ancient world, luxuriant with ivy and maidenhair, rose from the soil, and the eye traveled far over the misty Campagna to the encircling hills.

"Now tell me," he said firmly, "why you alone mourn on this day of victory for poverty and Saint Francis."

"I would not disturb your joy," John murmured sadly.

"You helped the good cause to triumph," Thomas persisted. "Yes, you helped greatly. Brother Arnulf tells me that he did show the Pope those letters of

Elias to the Emperor which you procured but forgot to show. And Gregory flew into a great rage, and swore that the man who wrote them should be cut off straightway from honor."

John groaned. What Thomas said did not diminish his gloom. He had believed Gregory to be swayed by nobler impulses.

"We can follow our Rule," the other went on. "We can be honest again in our profession of poverty."

John shrugged his shoulders. "Do you really think that evasions will cease because one man is deposed?"

"Some further definition of the Rule is doubtless desirable," Brother Thomas acknowledged thoughtfully, "and already it is discussed. I have heard suggestions of the men whom we might trust to make it. Brother Jean de Rochelle is one, and of course Alexander of Hales. And Brothers Robert de Bastia and Richard Rufus."

"Yes, they may define and define — and I see us splitting hairs till the crack of doom."

Brother Thomas exploded impatiently: "John, do conquer that trick of yours of taking thought for the morrow! What is going to happen is in the hands of the Good Lord. Meantime, to-day a great scandal is removed. For years I have been ashamed to look a son of Dominic in the face. Now they shall see that we are no crafty pretenders, but plain men living as we profess and not tolerating a leader false to his vows. John, I wonder if you are perverse enough to be grieving partly because you are sorry for Brother Elias?

Believe me, it was necessary for the salvation of that man's soul that he be deposed. Brother Aymon said as much at Oxford."

John's lips twitched in a reluctant smile. "No, I am not overtroubled with sympathy for Brother Elias, though I tried to pray for him instead of exulting at his downfall as the meeting went on."

"Then will you tell me," urged Thomas, still exasperated, "why you are scornful when we all rejoice?"

John's lips were unsealed.

"Did you see that jolly young brother we passed just now — Brother Salimbene? He has been here there and everywhere during these last weeks."

"Yes. There 's no harm in him," Brother Thomas replied. "Of course he is a fearful gossip."

"Do you think Saint Francis would have called him a knight of the Holy Ghost?"

Thomas threw back his head and laughed. "Why on earth are you talking about Brother Salimbene? I think Francis would have enjoyed him. He reminds me of Brother Juniper, about whom the old brothers tell such merry tales. Only a little less sanctified, I admit."

John had risen from the old masonry on which he had been seated and was pacing restlessly. "I talk of Brother Salimbene because there are so many like him — and worse. One asks why they embraced a life of poverty, and fears it is because they are too lazy for the cares of ownership. 'Irresponsible vagabonds!' My uncle Philip the monk called our Order that when

first I horrified him by joining it. He made me angry; but the phrase sticks in my mind. Why, some brothers are positively gluttonous. How many work faithfully with their hands, as the Father wished us to, as he so stressed in his Will? Some of the best evade, as these doctors of Paris! Thomas, I have met brothers to whom begging was no discipline at all, who would rather beg than work." John looked at his friend with shocked eyes. "It seems inconceivable, but it is true," said he.

Brother Thomas was not laughing any longer. "Yes, it is true. 'Brothers Fly,' Saint Francis called such," he agreed with a satiric twist to his tongue.

"Thomas," John's eyes were graver and graver, "I can imagine our Order becoming a pest in Europe.

"There are so many of us. Too many!" he went on presently. "Is it a light thing we have chosen, that all run after us? Have you noted here in the streets the number of very young boys wearing the habit? Children of twelve, of ten! How do they know what their vows mean? My friend Master Roger Bacon was always disgusted at our careless ways of letting these boys in. They have no chance to learn after they join us. They will grow up good-for-nothings."

"Why talk of abuses," Thomas was impatient still, "on this special day, when we might be glad, for once?"

"I suppose partly," John returned, "because Brother Elias really did good work in checking and regulating these matters. In spite of his own offenses against

the Rule, he did try to enforce a certain decorum in the Order. Some kinds of laxity he suppressed."

"But at what cost?" Thomas was thinking hard. "At the cost of freedom. These abuses of which you speak are the necessary price of liberty. See — one must choose. A rigid law, imposed from without, producing a delusive order and peace, or wide freedom, with abuses. Francis chose freedom. Is not this *libertà Francescana* dear to us?" He laid his hand on John's shoulder and continued: —

"Well you know that you and I choose the life of the Lesser Brothers from an inward urgency, renewed forever. Sometimes that inward impulse flags and fails; sometimes it ceases. Should it cease, the habit is a mockery; but who shall say that a man has no right to be of us if it only flags? Who shall judge the authenticity of his vocation? High standards are hard for men to maintain when they forfeit the sense of responsibility to property. That sense is a real power to regulate and control; why deny the fact? We have renounced it, and, on the other hand, we are not tight bound, like monks."

"We have our vows," John faltered.

"Ay! But who save God shall note if we be true to them? I think you are right in saying that defining the Rule will not avail much. It did not at first occur to Francis to draw up a Rule. No, it was a life he chose. And that life claims no shelter from cloister walls. Many fail and fall among us; but ah, the glory of those who follow faithfully!" Thomas' ardor was mounting.

"Where else in Christendom," he cried, "could such a sight be found as that assembly we have just left? Men who affect the destiny of nations, others great doctors of Paris and Bologna, counsellors of princes, saints marked by miraculous power, plain folk like you and me! Faithful lovers all of Lady Poverty, all one in Christ, all under the guidance of a Little Poor Man who taught that all the world holds dear was well lost for love. What hath God wrought! Who without praise could see that noble throng, gathered in years so brief from every Christian land, that throng of men who scorn property, who loathe reward, who give, asking for nothing again, who are spent for pure love, who are fulfilled in brotherhood?"

"Yes, so I thought," sighed John. "I was rapt in ecstasy. I saw a new life, destined to set free an enslaved world. I beheld cross-bearers in serried ranks, pressing upward in joy, following the illumined cross of Francis, showing the road to all men. And many crosses among them shone almost as bright as his. There were those who wearied, who chose a low and easy road; there were those who dropped their crosses; but the great array pressed on. They marched to Mount Sion, to the gates which stand open forever, through which all the glory and honor of the nations shall enter. Thomas, I beheld our Order strong enough to free the world from its dark slavery to property and power, and from its slavery to fear. I saw it as the soul of the Church to be! And then —"

He paused. He wrung his hands.

"And then — Brother Elias shouted 'You lie!' to Brother Aymon. And our best, our noblest, doctors of Paris, provincial ministers, saints with the light of love as I thought shining in their faces, took to brawling like street urchins."

"Alas! We have this treasure in earthen vessels," Brother Thomas mourned whimsically, but, as John thought, without adequate contrition. "The old Adam rose within me; I fought and screamed with the rest."

John smiled in spite of himself, but responded sternly, "What did you think of during that half hour of silence Pope Gregory enjoined?"

"I was too ashamed of myself to think about much of anything," Brother Thomas acknowledged.

"I thought, among other things, that my uncle Philip was right. I wished we were all monks. I thought the monks had the best of it."

"We should all be monks, if Elias had his way," remarked Thomas dryly.

"Or Brother Aymon, I fear. Certainly Brother Elias is not the only one. I often think, brother, that circumstances are pushing hard to make us into a new monastic order. That is what the Pope would like. Do you not think so?"

"If he would, he is false to the very central idea of our Founder," returned Thomas with energy. "Saint Francis was an innovator. He wished to follow the Counsels of Perfection while moving about with perfect freedom in the world. I am not even sure that he meant to make any difference between our Order and

the Third. He never called us an Order. We have only been so called this last year."

"Yes, I feel that way too," said John. "But I confess that lately my long talk with my uncle has been much in my mind. When I see the vagaries and the laxities among us, when I realize how divided we are, I feel the need of an ordered and sheltered life under obvious authority, to help us control ourselves. The Benedictine Rule has much in its favor."

"Perhaps, for women," reflected Brother Thomas. "I was not sorry when the Pope imposed it on the Clares, though Sister Clare nearly broke her heart over it. But I am sure it is not the true way for us men. I am no monk — not because I want more license than the monk, but because I want more freedom to love."

John's moroseness was gone. "Oh yes, oh yes!" he cried, "More love, in perfect freedom! To share the common life! Always I behold us, not as groups apart, but as a mighty fellowship, embracing and pervading the world. A fellowship delivered from greed, delivered from bargaining, never saying 'mine.' The common life, the common life made holy."

"I believe you see the whole world as following Francis." Brother Thomas was smiling at his ardor.

John accepted the challenge. "The whole Christian world," he amended. "I suppose that is what I meant when I saw our Order as the soul of the Church to be."

"My mind cannot stretch to that," Brother Thomas sighed; "yet take comfort, brother. The new life

to which Francis led the way is no dream; it is fact. Can you doubt that the Spirit is with us, you who have lived with Adam Marsh, with Brother Bernard? Turn your thought from our failures to our glories. Nay, turn from the past; turn to the future."

Then John's misery returned on him in a flood.

"The future! *Quae ventura sunt!* At what else was I forced to gaze, during our half hour's penance? And what did I see? Fightings within and fears without, and the fightings within the worst of it. Brother, say you in greeting, this day has peace returned to our House? I tell you, Thomas, that you mistake, for this day has opened the way to conflict cruel and bitter. The storm foreseen by Brother Lawrence was but a passing shower; prolonged tempests of dissension await us. Brother shall be divided against brother, our house shall be divided against itself. Listen! Who conquered Brother Elias? Not Bernard, not Francis, but the doctors of Paris. Honorable men, brilliant and alluring men! They call to me. But can votaries of learning be true to poverty? Can they toss security away, can they dispense with possessions? See — already they turn from the work of the hands, already demand settled abodes."

"It certainly is amazing, how scholars are pressing into the Order. Brother Giles is troubled like you. 'Paris, Paris, thou hast destroyed Assisi,' that is what he says. And he too grieves over our unworthy members. He says there are a great many in the Religion who do not belong there — that they are like

a peasant who should put on the armor of Roland and not know how to fight with it. Not all men, says he, know how to ride Bayard or even to sit his back without accident. You must see Brother Giles, John. You will enjoy him." Thomas was half carried away by sympathy, half eager to divert his friend. But John would not be diverted.

"What next I wish to see is La Verna," said he sombrely; and then, with mounting passion: —

"I think of you, counting our monies with your stick at Exeter; of Master Roger Bacon and his laboratories; of Brother Aymon, seeking to restrict authority in the Order to learned clerks. And well I love you all, but I say, He hath set the world in their hearts. And on the other hand I see those little folk and feeble, who would be fools for Christ! I would be a fool, I!" John was at the height of excitement; he was walking up and down. "A fool! A fool! with Brother Bernard, with Francis, with Jesus! 'This shall be your gate into the land of the living,'" he was quoting Saint Francis' own words, "'if ye, heirs of all things, desire to have nothing under the sky. Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and come, take up thy cross and follow Me.' A fool! A fool for Christ!"

Thomas had caught the contagion of passion. "And I — and I!" he cried.

"Let the world crucify us," John's speech was flowing on. "What else should we expect? But must the hands of our own brothers nail us to the cross? That

is what I foresaw." He was shuddering. A note of anguish had crept into his voice.

"I foresaw — prisons!" he cried abruptly.

The late afternoon sun of May was shining warm and calm on the peaceful hill. "How cold it is! I perish in this damp," murmured John, in unnatural, terror-stricken accents. A spasm passed over him. He sank to the ground, his face wan as ashes. Thomas, solicitous, sprang to his side.

John lifted frightened eyes to his friend. "I foresaw burnings." He spoke more faintly, in a sobbing whisper. "I saw brothers sent to the stake — by brothers. Must I lose my faith in our brothers? in our Order? in our Religion? Is this what Naughting means? Ah, Lady Poverty!"

Brother Thomas sat down by his side, put his arms around him.

"I will tell you a dream," he said soothingly. "It was recounted to me by one of our brothers from the Ancona Marches. He was in Paradise, but lonely, because he could not find Saint Francis, and so an angel led him to a far twilight place, and there he found the blessed Father tending a leper, loathsome with sores. 'This is my Order, which I will not leave, but it is leprous, without and within,' said the dear Father."

"Leprous without and within," wailed John.

"But Francis was with that leper; he had not deserted him," Thomas reminded him sadly. "John, my brother, you know well how a leper can be loved."

John rose, quieted, reached his arms cross-wise upward. "I could not heal Pierre; I cannot heal our Order; but there is One who heals. Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make us clean," he murmured. And Brother Thomas said, "Amen."

"Is one of you by any chance Brother John of Cornwall — Brother John of Sanfort?" A third voice broke in on the talk.

Brother Thomas indicated his companion.

"I am Brother Lucido," said the pleasant-faced friar, "and I am sent by Brother Aymon of Feversham to say that he would be obliged if Brother John of Sanfort would wait on him now, at once, at his first convenience."

John stared, frankly astonished. "Brother Aymon send for me? There must be some mistake!" he exclaimed.

"Is there another Brother John of Sanfort?" inquired Lucido politely.

"Brother Aymon? But he is deep in the affairs of the Order — new constitutions to draw up, a Minister-General to appoint; and all say it must be he." John marveled.

"The best way to find out is to go and see," suggested Thomas, who was looking delighted. "This young brother is beginning to make his mark," he added *sotto voce* to Brother Lucido.

"Brother Aymon? To-day? But I have often thought he did not know I existed!" John kept on exclaiming, as he rose to accompany Brother Lucido.

V

JOHN OR BONAVENTURA?

Brother Aymon sat writing in a mean little room matched by his mean old habit. After an abstracted "Enter!" and a curt nod, he was lost for a while to his callers. Brother Lucido slipped off presently, and John, left alone, gazed now at the window, now at Aymon's back. Nor was he unhappy, for the hurt restraint he usually felt in Brother Aymon's absent presence did not plague him to-day. On the contrary. Regard and pity overflowed his heart, and, being free from self, he was at peace.

These emotions, especially pity, increased when Aymon, having finished his letter, turned dejectedly around. And now the elder man allowed himself to become wholly aware of John. The young Englishman knew this instantly, and experienced in response what he had never known before, a consciousness of inner union with that earnest, burdened spirit.

"I have not seen you," said Brother Aymon, "since we were together before the church in Assisi. And I sent you down to the Portiuncula for your penance

because you admired the church." He was actually smiling a little.

"My penance was my blessing," John returned. "My heart has often thanked you for it."

"You were to make a choice," Brother Aymon reflected.

"I am afraid I did not make it exactly," John confessed, "but it was made for me. You see, I met Brother Bernard."

Brother Aymon was looking kind, but inscrutable. He spoke at length.

"You have moved quite in the direction I wished. I was pleased at your long seclusion at Saphro; such the soul needs, to strengthen it. You showed yourself a true man and tender in your care for your dying friend. And since you arrived in Rome you have been of real and intelligent service to the right cause. I do not allude only to your procuring the letters which convinced Pope Gregory of Elias' treachery, but to all your intercourse with your brothers. You have the gift of persuasion; you can commend where you believe. I perceive, my son, that your value to our Order may be exceptionally great."

John listened, amazed. He had supposed himself entirely ignored by Brother Aymon, and here his movements had been closely followed all the time.

"You must however be on your guard in two respects," Aymon went on. "You have to watch against an overnicety of scruples, and also, as a result of your inveterate custom of seeing both sides, against halting

between two opinions. It is not impossible for a man loyally to identify himself with one group, even while he sees all that is to be said for the opposite — not impossible, but a feat few achieve. For the Devil is a sinuous creature. He can wind himself into the subtlest intricacies of your conscience, there to pinch and paralyze action, or he can find effective disguise in the broad folds of your sympathies. One way or another, he is clever at rendering us futile."

John listened, more and more abashed. Brother Aymon, who had never appeared to see him, proved to know him alarmingly well. He found himself in a humble mood.

"I thank you, Father. You probe my hidden weakness. But surely," he added inwardly, "you did not summon me here to-night to talk about myself."

"It is not all weakness," said Brother Aymon. "To combine intensity of conviction with imaginative sympathy for others is a rare gift, which has its uses. God would not have us passive, but His ultimate Will is inscrutable to us poor mortals; wherefore it behooves us to be modest and flexible even while we are ardent. If we must choose, let us choose ardor, but to unite the ideals is best."

He paused. His manner changed. And now John was to be more surprised than ever, for Brother Aymon quite dropped the tone of the spiritual superior. He spoke as man to man, and John's quick eye detected that he looked particularly shrunken and forlorn.

"I have a commission for you — at once, to-night, if you will undertake it."

"Anything that I can do, my Father."

"It concerns the appointment, which this chapter must make tomorrow, of a new Minister-General."

"Yes!" John almost interrupted in his eagerness. "You — who else? Hearts all over Rome are praising you to-night. When Brother Elias left the hall disgraced and the Pope bade us proceed to a new election, all eyes turned to you. What can I do, in the matter of this election?"

"Prevent it!" groaned Brother Aymon.

John had blundered badly if he had thought to please him. The other went on, his face yet more pinched and sad.

"Do you not see? I summoned you because I thought you a person who would understand. I cannot, I will not succeed Brother Elias."

And John did see. Well he recalled Brother Aymon's trembling reluctance when the Oxford chapter had sent him forth on this errand; recalled the hidden face, the passionate defense so suddenly abandoned, the tears. Aymon since that day had aged greatly. John was sure that to contend against his friend had well-nigh broken his heart. And he understood the absent-minded indifference, the apathy toward other people, which he had in his egotism taken almost as personal affront.

"I obeyed the will of the brothers at Oxford." Brother Aymon had risen, looking piteous, wringing

his hands. "I worked faithfully for the downfall of my friend, with whom I had stood shoulder to shoulder. Ah, if you had known Elias in the early days — his wisdom, his zeal, his love for that great lover whose very sanctity at times blinded his eyes to mortal facts! Never have I known such a statesman as Brother Elias. Francis revealed to each of us the Way of Perfection, yes. But it was Elias who discerned, in that power Francis released, new force to invigorate the Church at large. The great dreams of those first days! East and West united! The universities reclaimed for Catholic truth! Elias and I, side by side, working together for those noble aims. And then — and then —"

Brother Aymon drooped once more into his deep dejection. "Then did the Adversary conquer. Then did I see my friend misled by the devils of luxury and pride."

He looked appealingly at John. "I have not spared him, nor myself. By propaganda among the brothers, by manipulation of politics at the Papal Court, by all means one can command I have undermined the influence of Brother Elias. You and others have rendered valiant help. The end is won, the scandal is over. The Order can recover its dignity and worth. And now I demand to be left in obscurity for a season. I cannot bear," he lifted his bowed head, looked with wistful gravity into John's eyes, "I cannot bear to succeed the man I ousted."

"What would you have me do?" John asked.

"Go about this evening among the brothers. Work for the appointment of Brother Albert of Pisa. If office I must have, — but I would avoid all office if that may be, — I would rather succeed Albert than Elias. But save me if possible. I have noticed that you know singularly well how to play on men's minds. Say that I am old and ill, which is quite true. The Zealots with whom you have been associated of late will not be keen for me; they can easily be diverted. Those inclined to the side of Brother Elias will naturally prefer another appointment. They will hope that almost any other leader will be less strict than I. It is always easy, by contact with both extremes, to destroy confidence in a man of the middle way, like myself. Oh, you must be clever! You will know the reasons to urge on this man, on that. Not too congenial, I know, this task I ask of you; but did I not tell you that you must not be overnice about your scruples? I beg this service as a personal favor. Help me! For help I need. I would go pray in peace."

As man to man, John answered, not folding his hands on his breast in token of holy obedience, but looking straight into the other's eyes.

"I will do what you ask me, Brother Aymon."

He could not imagine a more distasteful service. To plunge once more, deeper than ever, into the mire of intrigue! To work his way among the intricacies of human motives, taking advantage of weaknesses in others, which he despised! He recoiled; but Brother Aymon's need was great, and John's pity strong.

He turned to go, but thoughts seethed and whirled in him, then, finding their centre, became suddenly crystallized. He wheeled back.

"I will do this for you. But I must tell you the truth. My motive will not be quite what you think. I can work to this end in all honesty, for I do not really want you to be our leader. While you were speaking I became aware of this, and I think you should understand the spirit in which I go forth to execute your commission and to labor for the appointment of Brother Albert of Pisa as Head of the Order." John was his most courteous self, but his tones held no apology.

It was Brother Aymon's turn to be astonished now. But he took John's statement in good part, stared at him a little humorously, and waited.

"You see," John went on, realizing that he must explain himself, "that choice which you sent me to the Portiuncula to make, did what you wished, in that it forced me to separate myself root and branch from Brother Elias. But it went further than you expected, for it separated me from you too."

Understanding dawned in Brother Aymon's eyes. "You have been with Brother Bernard," he reflected, "and with Brother Rufino. Holy men, the treasure of our Order, but men," he hesitated, "men who do not quite see the world as it is, my son."

John did not reply. Brother Aymon gathered himself together, paused a moment, spoke firmly.

"John! With your sober English wits, your comprehension of men, your practical powers, you surely do

not mean to identify yourself with the party of the Zealots!"

"Call them the Spiritual party, my Father," John returned with animation. "I hear them described by that name too, and I like it best."

Brother Aymon motioned him to sit down, and spoke deliberately.

"This day's work," said he, "clears the way for the obliteration of faction and the magnificent upbuilding of our Order. There is much to be done. In these doings you should play your part. Before I left England, Brother Adam Marsh and I talked your future over together. He expects much of you, and is keen to have you proceed under my supervision. Do you trust us?"

John did not answer at once. Dreams and memories which Brother Aymon could not read were in his eyes: dreams of a Cornish valley; of the convent at Minster; memories of his uncle Philip.

Exasperated by his delay, Aymon spoke sharply. "Will you thwart our plans for you? In order to follow Lady Poverty, must you become a fool?"

Unlucky phrase! "Yes! Yes! I would be a fool for Christ's sake," John asserted, his face aglow. And he broke into the little Italian couplet first heard from Brother Richard of Devon: —

> "Senno me pare e cortesia
> Empazzir per lo bel Messia."

Brother Aymon sighed. He settled himself wearily to the task of persuasion.

"Do you not see that absolute refraining from possessions is an impossibility?"

John replied with a torrent of quotations dear to Francis and ever on the lips of the Spirituals: "'Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves.'"

"The passage is no longer in our Rule," Aymon broke in. But John countered curtly: "It is none the less in the Gospels. What except the world in the Church caused Pope Honorius to change the Gospel Rule that Francis loved? I shall follow it, with Francis and Brother Bernard." He spoke relentlessly.

"Follow it in spirit," Aymon was restless.

"Oh, Father!" John reproached. And Brother Aymon looked abashed, while the younger man, still quoting the Rule, went on.

"'In no wise shall the brothers receive money nor wealth of any kind, neither personally nor through a third person. Let them hold nothing for themselves, neither house nor land nor any possession. Let them go trustfully, questing for alms. This is the height of most exalted poverty. This is your portal, which leads into the land of the living. Wholly adhering thereto, you choose, beloved brothers,'" John's words were falling with slow emphasis, "'You choose forever to have *nothing* beneath the sky.'"

"And as another says, 'The one thing proper to us is to have no property.' And the Apostle, 'As having nothing and yet possessing all things.' And the Book

of the Acts, 'Neither said any that what he had was his own, but they had all things common.' Do not seek to explain away such precepts. 'Without gloss, without gloss, without gloss,' Francis bade us to follow."

Brother Aymon was wordless under this deluge of quotations, and John continued more quietly: —

"Since I have lived with Brother Bernard and Brother Rufino, I have learned that entire obedience to the Rule is possible. And my place is with those who practise it without compromise or modification; which means, dear Father, that it is not with you."

Aymon glanced, sadly and a little quizzically, at his tattered habit, and lifted his eyebrows.

"Oh, you are yourself true to poverty." John spoke lovingly. "Do not think that I fail to honor you and the beloved Master Adam and the rest. It is not your personal life I question, but your policies for the Order. Alas! They lead it far from the will of Francis."

Aymon was on the defensive. "Do you not see that the very growth in numbers —"

John broke in a little impatiently: "I know everything you are about to say. The need for permanent houses. The dangers of mendicancy. The desire to further learning. The endorsement of trustees by more than one Pope. Yes, I know every argument. But when all is said, I cannot for my part vow one thing and endorse another."

And as Brother Aymon did not speak, he pressed his questions home.

"Do you not encourage the establishment of formal monastic houses, which may even receive legacies?"

"To these houses we never hold the title," Aymon replied.

"'Neither personal property, nor through a third person,'" John quoted firmly.

"Is it better to become a public charge?" Aymon queried. But the other went on: —

"Do you not seek to transform us into an order of clerics? Or at least to debar all lay brothers from office?"

"Would you have us governed by ignorant and illiterate folk?"

"Saint Francis did not fear lack of letters."

"How shall ignorant men pursue those studies which are our chief glory?" Brother Aymon was in dead earnest. But John quoted the phrase dear to Brother Giles. "'Paris, Paris, thou hast destroyed Assisi.' What would Francis have said, think you, to your plea?"

Brother Aymon had rallied both his dignity and his conviction. His accents held a trace of that authority which John had always resented, yet he spoke temperately and well.

"My son, awake! The road on which you travel leads to evasion of every problem involved in the common life of men. It will lead you far from those friendly habitations where brothers dwell together in unity."

John faltered a little. "But Brother Francis told

Brother Cæsar of Spires that if the brothers proved faithless to the Rule he might withdraw, alone or with two or three like-minded, to keep it in its integrity. What a man like Cæsar did, may I not do?"

"In a hermitage, yes. Not in the world of men. Will you desert the world that Francis loved?" Aymon sighed as he spoke, and John sighed also.

"My heart these many months has been in conflict. But it is your way that appears to me to lead far from the common life. I am going to trust Francis — and Jesus," said he.

Another long pause, in which John mused on the resemblance between Aymon and his uncle Philip. In Aymon he felt a higher consecration; the sweet and liberal spirit of Francis shone through him still. But what would happen if he had his way? The sons of Francis would, as time passed, simply become a new monastic order, conformed to set tradition, living on easy terms with the unchallenged way of the world. With such orders the world had no quarrel. But in the gospel of Francis, and, John believed, in the Gospel of Christ, there was a different element; an element so disturbing that the world would forever reject it but never forget it; that the Church would waver forever between patronage and persecution.

Persecution! Again came that strange chill shudder, and that extraordinary dread which he had felt upon the Palatine. And again his intrepid mind disregarded it, plunged down the vista of the future.

He thought aloud to Brother Aymon: —

"Are there not always two kinds of Christian people, those who take the social order as it is, hopeless of challenge, and withdraw from her in their souls, and the innovators, who count the world well lost for Christ, yet flee her not, but embrace while they defy? With them must be my part, with Francis, with Jesus. Yours is the present, Father, for the world will only ridicule us — or crucify; nor have we the visible power for good that you will have. But I think the future is ours. *Quae ventura sunt!* I see those things which are to come. The New Age of the Spirit shall dawn; and we who follow Francis the Innovator are the soul of the Church which shall arise."

Brother Aymon listened, patient, inscrutable.

"In that day our Order shall not need to haggle with popes or lawyers over the meaning of this or that, the length of a garment, the definition of *pecunia*, the place of trustees, the point where use ceases and ownership begins. For all 'mine' and 'thine' shall be 'ours,' within the bounds of Holy Church, and the word 'reward' shall be lost to Christian speech. No one shall ever again feel to his anguish that what serves his own need has been stolen from the poor. The meek shall inherit the earth, and Lady Poverty shall welcome us all to her mountain, whence our cloister, the wide world, shall shine before us!"

John's words were tumbling over each other. He paused, out of breath. And at this point Brother Aymon interposed dryly: —

"And what is happening to the wide world all this time?"

John stammered, wilting a little: "I think the Church and the world will be one."

Aymon's patience was exhausted. He spoke with sharp authority.

"Come down from that mountain! Return to the present. After all, you live in it. Will you help me, John of Sanfort? Master Roger Bacon, Brother Adam Marsh, eagerly await your fellowship. Great days lie before us, even as I have said. Our Order is destined to rise in importance. We and our brothers, the children of Dominic, can give to Europe a new understanding of the faith, which shall water the universities, lately so arid, with the fragrant streams of Christian learning. We shall extend to lands far off the knowledge of the true God. Excluding wastrels and extravagant dreamers whose dreams do but bring disturbance and disorder, we shall observe a watchful and wise temperance toward the goods of this world, and shall offer a sure refuge to godly and sober men. Our touch shall be on the life of nations, and if we compromise with the world, it will be that the world may be saved. Will you help me, John?" Brother Aymon repeated.

And, as to Father Philip when first he became a novice, John repeated: —

"I have heard another Voice."

Brother Aymon's impassive face had resumed its

mask. He looked small and lonely. And John, who had been on the point of leaving the room, came swiftly back, following an impulse.

"I love you so much, dear Father — so deeply I honor you!" he pleaded. "In the years to come, God will grant, I think, that I shall honor you more and more, even while I oppose you. And you?" His shy look was on him.

Then Brother Aymon held out his arms, tears streaming down his cheeks, and John was held in close embrace. "My son! My son!" sobbed Aymon.

"Dearest Father," John's eyes too were tear-blurred, "I can do no other. I know my life may be cast away useless, but I do believe that those who follow the Gospel literally, as Francis did, though it lead them to prison and to judgment, are the soul of the Church to be."

Then shyness overcame them both, — English as they were, though trained in a fellowship where emotion had free course, — and they drew apart.

"Many the paths, but one the goal," said Brother Aymon. "You have chosen a barren way; but I know it may be the straight way upward."

And presently he added: "Two young men I have watched of late, seeing in them possibilities of future leadership for the Order. For I am old and my generation is passing away. You have been one. The other is a youth about your age, called Bonaventura. I do not know if you saw him in Paris. My eye has been on you both. But I now understand with

regret," — and Brother Aymon sighed, "that you will not be of much value to the Order, at least in ways which men can recognize. I perceive that Brother Bonaventura is to be our future leader."

> (The circle of light dear to old Brother John in the prison was traveling toward the verge of the wall, where it must vanish in due time. As the friar watched it dreamily, his mind carried two distinct trains of impression, as minds will sometimes do. He was talking with Brother Aymon. But below that talk there ran as a refrain one of the Lauds with which he had greeted the Easter dawn: —
>
> "Praised be Our Lord God for the great learning and the charming ways of Brother Bonaventura, and for his sincere belief that he does Thee service by keeping us in this prison.
>
> "Blessed are they who pardon one another for Thy Love's sake.")

John's smile was all sunshine.

"I did see Brother Bonaventura in Paris. Do you not remember telling me that Master Alexander Hales said that he was born without original sin? He looks so; he has a saintly face," said the young Englishman. And he took his leave.

VI

LA VERNA

Brother John was at La Verna. Before him lay the outspread world, gentle as a summer sea; for he was resting below the Penna, under the broken land and deep ravines sacred to the greatest of Franciscan mysteries. Already the brothers, cherishing their "most devout mountain," had touched these slopes to cultivation. Plump sheep moved placidly in the sunshine and shadow of the grasslands, and a beautiful white sheep dog bounded up, as John sat gazing dreamily over the opal and amethyst of the far horizon. He thrust his wet nose imperiously into John's hand. "He comes here for his alms," Brother Illuminato had explained, chuckling a little.

Poor Brother Illuminato! He was sad these days, in spite of the chuckle, and averse to talking. After the fall of Brother Elias he had hurried straightway here, for he was especially at home on La Verna, being one of those to whom Saint Francis himself had entrusted the care of the *monte divotissimo*. It was evident that his ways and those of Brother Elias had

divided. Brother Elias, for that matter, did not need a secretary any longer. He was reported to be in hiding and in penitence. People shrugged shoulders over that report.

John never understood Brother Illuminato very well, but he indignantly discredited censorious hints to the effect that this brother had adhered to the party of Elias on account of certain privileges given him the previous October, in the disposal of Rocca Accarina, his ancestral estate. John, as he saw him, did not judge him to be that kind of man — rather perhaps a little over-simple; and he liked best to picture to himself Brother Illuminato before the Soudan with Francis.

John at present was not disposed to feel censorious toward any one. Nor was his thought paying much attention to either Brother Illuminato or Brother Elias. Perhaps he was not thinking at all. As he gazed afar in the luminous June weather, over an earth more luminous than the air, he bathed in exceeding peace. And quietly, without surprise, he discovered that this was the peace of pure love, love wide as the landscape.

His natural surroundings had frequently been to him the parallel to his spiritual state. At Saphro he had abandoned himself to the abyss, and within the awesome glooms below conscious being he had found the waiting God. On that strange morning when he had battled up breathless through fierce winds to the saddle on Monte Subasio, where pain and death had been transfigured for him into victory, he had learned that "on every height there lies repose." This morning

neither aspiration nor surrender, neither height nor depth, could meet his need. His spirit lost itself rather in the wideness of God's mercy, and the lovely light, playing over all diversities of hill and valley, received him and revived.

Breadth! He craved the luxury of expansion. The world he overlooked showed infinite variety of line and modeling, all suffused with the glorious light of Brother Sun. So with the world of men. As his eyes rested refreshed on the modulations of the far-receding hills, his spirit rejoiced in the infinite reflections of God's love in human lives. And seen from a height and from distance, most of these lives looked fair.

Brother Aymon. Brother Adam Marsh. That splendid Oxford group. The doctors of Paris. Ardent and seeking souls, sharing in worldly ways only so far as seemed to them essential for the work they had to do. They compromised, to be sure, with the impulse of possession, but from what high aims, in what personal humility! Light from the Sun of Righteousness shone on them exquisitely clear.

Pope Gregory — John had been shocked by the Pope's diplomatic methods. Moreover, he shrank distressed from reliance on the arm of flesh to defend the temporalities of the Church, for like most religious radicals of his own day and earlier, he traced her chief woes back to the gift of Constantine. But visions from Beyond were vouchsafed to Gregory. And John recognized his firm, disinterested devotion to the cause of right as he saw it. Christian statesmanship?

Surely, if motive determine quality. Hills arose in the middle distance, scarred and harsh, one flank in shadow. But light bathed their summits.

John's mind passed to Brother Salimbene and the many like him, lazy, gossipy, greedy, no ornament to the Order, but after all, honest most of them, probably visited now and then by a faint gleam from the eyes of Lady Poverty. He could love Brother Salimbene.

There were his own people in Cornwall; and his sight strained toward the horizon, hardly discernible in the blue weather. High-thoughted gentlemen he knew them to be, loyal to their class and to their overlord. His little sister might have been one of the Poor Ladies, had she lived, he thought. How he had liked to twine her hair around his fingers!

Those turbulent nobles and their retainers in the Roman streets — his relatives, granted the difference in race, might act much like them. And these nobles too were ardently loyal to the side they had embraced — would lightly die for it as they had lightly lived.

Finally, and not for the first time, he reviewed in thought his colloquy with his uncle the monk, Father Philip at Minster. And with what genuine thirst for fellowship! The great monastic orders rose before him, with their splendid traditions. Francis had not been of their company. He had wanted to be one with the world, not to flee it; he had wished to share the common life. But how many saints the cloister had nurtured! And how significant that their partial renunciation of property, personal as it was, not corporate, should have

made their days drop fatness! Did not their very wealth, a scandal to the true son of Francis, witness triumphant to a power in meekness to inherit the earth? Uncle Philip had thought so.

Only — there was the poor old world, scorned and discarded. A better way must be than the monkish way. What had he said to Brother Aymon? "In that day, perhaps the Church and the world shall be one." But he could not puzzle that out just now.

The blazing sun had chased him into shelter. He sought the soft shadow of a spreading beech, and yielded himself to the luxury of loving.

Men! So miraculously interesting! He contemplated them, group by group, with tender wonder. The sheep cropped peacefully near by, guarded by the big dog. Charming to look at, sheep, but a trifle monotonous. Men were more exciting. God must delight in their variety.

All these diverse folk of whom he had been thinking were eagerly seeking, in their diverse ways, to assert life. But only a few had even a dim inkling that life cannot be asserted directly, that it must be lost before it can be found. The people with whom John belonged had at least heard of that paradox; they belonged nominally to the fellowship of the Cross. But alas! how seldom they behaved in accord with their knowledge! Did not one and all hold back something of the price? Pope Gregory, Bishop of all Christendom, seeking by force of arms to protect the Body of the Prince of Peace. The monastic Orders,

never shutting themselves away from corporate greed, trying too often to replace the surrender of the spirit by the mortification of the flesh. Brother Aymon — John paused on Brother Aymon; but the lust of power and the love of learning, were they not akin?

Could it truthfully be said of any one among these that naked he bore the naked Cross?

And what about Brother John of Sanfort? He has a saintly face, Brother Bonaventura.

That principle of death which is life was working in every one of them, according to his measure. But it worked against heavy odds, against that illusion of life which led to separateness and the death eternal. Loving them all, John sadly saw this to be so; but just then something blurred, and he could not see clearly. And at this point the big white dog pushed a violent nose against him. High noon was now ablaze. John was sitting in the best patch of shadow, and his dogship needed it for the sheep. So John rose, laughing, stretched himself, and went up the hill to Brother Illuminato. If one talked about Naughting, surely one could yield the shade to Sister Sheep!

His own life was not so pure or confident that he could refrain from loving anybody. It was not for him to say "thou fool" to other people, or to other schools of thought. John gave thanks for the gift of belief in men. As the woods received him, shutting out the billowing distance of the earth, he rejoiced that the tender breadth of the divine tolerance might be his spirit's home.

The air was still hot, the sky brilliant, as he climbed that afternoon to the Penna, the top of the ridge. The steep trail led through vast beech woods, varied with evergreens of secular growth. It would not have been natural for John to leave a possible height unconquered, and these cliffs, this mounting way, these cool and mighty woods, were grateful after that wide expanse of the morning. He could not think about other men just now. Like the interior of a man's own heart — the forest. It had its private means of expressing infinitude: the myriad shadows of the leaves, the secrets of the mosses. It knew the intimate treasure of the least. And always Saint Francis climbed beside him, through the trees that he had loved.

They stood together, Francis and he, on the highest point of that rocky ridge. There lay Italy, from sea to sea — for one looked across the whole peninsula. But John did not notice Italy, obscured as it was in the afternoon haze. Mood and need had changed. Height was what he needed now. He threw himself on his back, was lost in the sky. What he sought was all Above.

Breadth! How good it had been, that far-flung darting of his spirit in love among the diverse ways of men! How good, but how inadequate! Even to apprehend breadth, one had to be a little exalted; the ocean itself had always looked narrow to him, seen from a low shore. And who could resist the summons of the peak?

Well, here he was, here whither Francis must so

often have wandered. And he waited for what should be revealed by height.

Reënforcement of that old resolve not to stop short of the ultimate, difficult choice. Quickened knowledge that his place was with the Zealots. He was to love and honor other groups, but was himself to follow the steeper, lonelier path. Had not Brother Aymon said one could do both?

As his sight was lost in unobstructed light, he beheld the value of the extremist. The man of compromise was needed too, was probably, as he had said to Brother Aymon, more useful in his generation. But what about the generations hereafter to be born?

Many admirable men of the middle way there had been in the time of Francis, good Christians, excellent citizens, churchmen saintly and learned. But it was Francis, not they, who had renewed the life of the world. To a frozen age he had brought the reviving breath of spring. If it were not for your extremist, what new life in the soil would ever stir?

The Age of the Spirit was to dawn. Might not the surest way to hasten its coming be to live as if it were already here? So to live, cutting athwart accustomed ways, meant to be very lonely. It meant the mode of life practised by the most absolute followers of Francis, of the Gospel. For in that Age of the Spirit no man could say that aught that he possessed was his own, neither could he use anything of which the least of his brothers might conceivably have need.

John lay on his peak, quiet rather in soul than in mind, for his mind saw clearly the ridiculous implications of this idea. Yet in no other choice could his spirit be at peace. The afternoon waned. He rose, made his way down through the dusking forest. And now the time had come for him to claim the consummation of long desire. Now, at last, he should dare to draw near, to enter the most sacred sanctuary of the sacred mount.

He had received permission to keep his vigil in the ravine where his master Saint Francis had been stigmatized. It was not yet changed into a man-made chapel by mistaken piety. Still the great cleft in Mother Earth was left visible, suggesting the riven anguish of the soul. Still the language of the place was that which had always expressed to John the last reality, dizzy descent, calling for such abandonment of hold as brought terror swift and sharp, succeeded by miraculous repose.

From the hour of his profession — nay, from earlier still — the sense of the sanctity of depth had been recurrent within him. Lady Poverty waited for him in the abyss.

Long since, at Exeter, Brother Lawrence had put his hand over that strange picture of the Stigmatization, drawn by Brother William of England, saying, "This is not yet for you, my son." John's desire from that time had been strong to visit the holy place where the Mystery had been enacted. Oh to have been Brother Leo, privileged to behold from afar the dear Saint in

his ecstasy! Oh that, with Sir Jerome the knight, he might have touched the wound in the side!

For many months he had not dared reflect on what had happened here. But courage had increased of late. Now he knelt, in dark and stillness, arms upstretched, spirit quiet. And Time had stopped.

Alas! The dusk was illumined for him by no seraphic wings, nor could he feel the blessed presence of Francis. Vacancy. The dark night of the soul was upon him.

But gradually came an experience in which he had learned to recognize mystic potency, the sensation of the whole weight of his being, dropping, falling, abandoned. His intelligence, however, hovered aloof, aware of that strange, swift falling, cognizant of its meaning, as never before. Through the cavernous depths of personality that something that was John dropped, seeking for reality on which it could repose.

The descent was not of this moment only. It had known many stages, had lasted long; it was a formula in which his whole life was rendered. And at each stage the soul had clutched at support, in desperate fear of the last surrender. That first abandonment of props which the world most cherished, of wealth, of rank, seemed remote, insignificant, nigh forgotten. So far, the way had been clear; John had never had from the first any doubt that for himself this renunciation at least was necessary. But how soon the fall had faltered! For the later supports which had been abandoned had perhaps been right and blessed. The only trouble was that they were tight entwined either with

the world's falsities or with the greedy instinct of acquisition. For John, at least, they were the enemies to poverty of spirit — the life of scholarship, with its hostages given to fortune; the craving, jealous, perilous life of the affections.

Another depth had been sounded lately; at another point he had yearned to clutch at a sustaining prop. The prospects of leadership in the Order which Brother Aymon had held out to him had powerfully bidden him to pause. He was horrified at his own response — a response natural enough, for John came of a strong race, men who had counted and rejoiced to count in their several generations. Ambition, deadly foe to Lady Poverty, may be abandoned in the open only to return by another way. What might not John do to purify his Order, to work through it for the regeneration of the world! All such hopes he relinquished by joining his fortunes to the bewildered little band of the Zealots, for bewildered they were, those dreamers who sought utterly to renounce the proprium. Drawn some of them by the strong undertow of heresies, practising often, even when orthodox, an extreme asceticism which denied Francis' lauds of the creatures and his sane knowledge that the loss of life is not the end, only the beginning of life in its fullness. Fanatics and foolish, none of them sure of the Way.

To the end of his life, John would be uncertain whether Brother Aymon and the moderates had not been in the right after all.

Ah! Was not here indeed the lowest depth of

Naughting — to be unsure of your own cause? Poverty, your demands are hard. The process of letting go must indeed be complete. Surrender of outward possessions had been easy; surrender of inward desires was difficult, could never be complete or secure. But surrender of the very conviction to which these had been sacrificed? Ah, here came the sharpest test! Loyalty and doubt — were they compatible? A test impossible! Yet how otherwise hold both to the broad tolerance of the morning and the intense conviction of the noon?

Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed. Consolation crept through his darkness.

At that solemn midnight mass in the chapel of his castle at Sanfort he had heard a Voice; and what it said was secret, for him only. To every man the private call, yet to every man it is the same Voice that speaks. Below all intellectual conviction it had sounded. He had obeyed. He would continue to obey till life should end.

But life stretched futile before him, one great mistake, an obstinate folly, a blind weakness. The falling sensation intensified into deadly sickness. Poverty, your demand leads to the suicide of all that makes man, man. Death! Naughting! Nothingness had reached its final term, and John was spent.

Spent! He could no longer watch the stages of that dizzy fall, for the faculty which watched had yielded itself up with his other powers. Activity was concentrated in submission. Thought ceased. Did reality begin where thought ended?

In the negation, he became slowly aware of his surroundings. He was kneeling still, in the posture of the Stigmatized. His eyes were still fixed on that rock upon which or above — for accounts differed — the image of the crucified seraph had appeared to Saint Francis. That image was not seen by John, except through the mental eye, but very quietly he passed into brooding upon it. How often the record of it had confused him, had terrified! For it was a vision new, mysterious. Only to a great Innovator could it have been given, mediated as it was by no memories of art, by no direct Scriptural suggestion. A vision of the Crucified, encircled by those mighty wings which burned with celestial fire. Vision baffling to the mind.

Suddenly now the meaning came home to him, and he trembled as he knelt. That nailed Figure! Hands that could not be reached out in healing; feet that could not tread earth's ways. The helplessness of the Cross. Weakness, shame, defeat to the uttermost — they were the centre of the symbols of Power! The Seraph Crucified! Wings that transcended earth, that bore the weight of the most holy Cross and of Him Who hung thereon, Love's Sacrifice, up into the eternal light, and down, on fire with that light, to earth's extremest need. The Naughting of the Cross was life, not death. It was the source of all creative force.

And so the very blankness of John's vigil was blessed to him. In the absence of any hint of vision or consolation he discovered faith's last triumph, the fulfillment of the glorious Adventure of Naughting.

The first chirp of birds, the hint of light, gray among the ghostly trees. And a ghostly form, white and unreal, came leaping. The big dog was caressing him, licking his face, jumping all over him, a rapture of warmth and muscle and movement. And John saw, or guessed, Brother Thomas waiting at the head of the ravine.

"Come," said John joining his friend, "let us go to Brother Giles!"

"It is broad daylight on the uplands," said Brother Thomas. "The night lingers long in these ravines."

VII

THE SECRET OF NAUGHTING

"I HAVE not seen you so merry since you were a novice," said Brother Thomas wonderingly.

The friends were walking past fields fragrant with the breath of early summer. Among the wheat ran now a bright undertone of gladiolus, now an elusive lacework of wild passion-flower, the nigella. Of this last John, humming, gathered a nosegay. His step was light and swift; Brother Thomas, finding it hard to keep up, thought — and after his wont reproached himself for thinking — how well John would look on a curvetting horse.

"You will be twirling round soon, like Brother Masseo," he called, breathless.

"Ah, but that was to find the road; we know it," John called back. He sat down to wait on a low vineyard wall, where Thomas joined him. He had passed into a quieter mood, but happy still.

"Do you remember saying to me at Oxford," he spoke a little absently, "that I had far to travel, and should find no rest till I had learned the Secret of

Naughting? You were quite right. I am on my journey, and the road is the road of joy."

Brother Thomas did not respond. His face, though less saturnine than at Oxford, yet bore a settled look of sadness, the look of one who moves ever among shadows. John eyed him wistfully.

"It is strange: to have learned that the road of Naughting is the road of joy. That is because it is the Way of the Holy Cross. Thomas, did you not love those ancient crosses pictured in mosaic in the old Roman churches? Jewel-studded they rise in the fields of Paradise, and the rivers of the water of life flow from beneath them. My Cross is all a-flower."

"Mine pierces me with arrows," said Thomas darkly; and the two men continued, groping each to utter his inmost truth.

"I was blind," mused John. "From the Cross streams healing light."

"The light has blinded me; I wander in darkness." Brother Thomas passed his hand over his brow.

"The Cross has loosed my tongue; I may turn preacher," — and John flashed a whimsical smile at his friend. But Thomas shook his head.

"It has made me dumb, who once was full of words. Into those depths where words are not, it has led me."

"I was sunk in death. Through the Cross I live again!" John cried.

"And I am nailed to it as dead." The passion with which Thomas spoke was almost fierce. His voice was sunken. He had risen; stood with averted face.

"Oh brother, you are warmed, but I consumed," he said.

"Brother," said John reverently, "I do not understand."

But when the older man turned to his friend, eyes gravely meeting revealed what words could not. They walked on, very still.

"You are as one who hides his lighted candle," said John at last. "Even sighs may not blow on its precious heat."

"And you," said Thomas, his face lighting as he looked at his friend, "cannot conceal the *Jubilo* which sings within your heart."

Presently they returned to the surface of life. "What are your plans after seeing Brother Giles?" asked Thomas. "Will you not come back with me to England? I suppose my post is there. I suppose —" and he made a wry face — "that I shall keep on counting money."

"After all, we lived at Exeter much according to Saint Francis' will," John comforted him. "The ways in all English houses of which I know are very different from those in some great convents here, which receive legacies, sell privileges of burial places, even institute lawsuits, and accept vineyards at the order of the Pope."

"Unbelievable abuses!" cried Brother Thomas. "I am still hoping that they will be checked, now Brother Elias is deposed."

"I wonder," John hazarded, sighing. Though his

was the happier temperament of the two men, he was often less sanguine than the other when it came to a practical outlook.

"You will return with me?" pressed Brother Thomas.

John shook his head, and said, almost gayly, "I have asked to be the companion of Brother Gilbert, at least for a time, that I may help him in the care of the sick. We shall be much in the leper settlements. I have no knowledge of medicine, but Brother Gilbert thinks I have some natural power. He stays in Italy, it seems; and I am glad, for here I suspect that the struggle between the strict observers of our Rule and the laxer party will be more clear-cut than elsewhere."

Brother Thomas sighed, but made no attempt to change John's resolution. The younger man added presently, with a touch of reserve in his tone: —

"I shall write to you, brother. And when I write, I shall use for signature the Tau which our Father Francis used." He was alluding to that mark of the Cross, mystically dear to the early friars.

Brother Thomas changed the subject.

"Do not be too much disappointed if Brother Giles does not even speak to you. He is a very special person, Giles. Sometimes he is really in a trance, sometimes, I think, he simply prefers not to say anything. I believe that if the King of France himself, our friend the great and saintly King Louis, were to visit him, Brother Giles might not say a single word." Thomas' face lit up with amusement at this flight of fancy. "I can quite imagine that they might merely look at

each other silently, and separate, and the King go on his way."

John threw back his head and laughed. "Do you think the King would mind?"

"No," Brother Thomas acknowledged. "I think they would understand each other."

Now the two had passed through Perugia; they had reached Monte Ripido; they were close to Brother Giles. John thought Giles looked like a gnarled olive tree. Brother Rufino was a tall cypress, all shadow in which darting sunlight could find golden depths. Brother Bernard was an oak.

He had ample time to play with these ideas and also to study the surroundings, for Brother Giles paid no attention to them. He was not in a trance. He was digging among his cabbages. And even John, who knew nothing about gardens, perceived that the cabbages were receiving expert care.

As for the country seen from the slopes of Monte Ripido, it dropped on one side down a foreground of descending valleys richly green, a-blossom with late hawthorn and honeysuckle; but on the other it was unsubstantial and unearthly even beyond the wont of landscapes in Umbria. The earth was more translucent than the darkening sky, swept by sirocco clouds. On the nearer hills, the silver of the olive trees spotted a country curiously white in sun and blue in shadow, colors of a fading dream, in which now and then a black cypress struck a sharp accent of reality. It lay all in

one plane under the severe purity of the sky, like a prospect in the mind; to John's fancy it was the prayers of Brother Giles made visible — the prayers of a great contemplative, for whom the rich fertility and human tenderness of earth had been lost in the mere transmission of light. A landscape which had attained Naughting.

Brother Giles showed his peasant origin. He was a little man, of stocky build, and his face with its rather heavy features was knotted and twisted in a queer intensity. To tend cabbages may be almost as absorbing as to be in a trance. He was buried in his task.

John had been all day in a light-hearted mood. Mischief seized on him now. Leaving Brother Thomas behind, and picking his way among the vegetables, he went closer to the stooped little figure, and shouted into Giles' ear: —

"Brother! You think it better to work for our living than to beg it!"

Brother Giles straightened himself with a jerk, and became aware, with no apparent surprise, of the gray-frocked newcomers.

"Aye, work, work!" His accents were friendly. "The youth who refuses to labor, rejects the kingdom of Heaven. Work well with our hands, as Francis bade. Think you these trees yield fruit without hands to manure their roots and to prune them, or that houses grow like bushes? Work, brother, work! But never demand pay for thy work. Kill within thee desire to measure thy gifts against thy gains."

"If I seek not pay, how can I live with honor?" queried John, lifting his eyebrows.

"Live on the alms of love. And divest thee swiftly of thy wealth."

"Does not a man deny his duty toward the family God has given him if he bestow his money on the poor?" asked John with mock earnestness.

Brother Giles' deep-set little eyes twinkled. "His family will not be orphaned. They have a Father who will give them daily bread."

"If a man give his wealth away, his heirs will greatly mourn."

Giles shrugged. "Pray that their mourning be such as Christ can comfort."

"Is not money a creature of God?" John queried.

Giles shook a vigorous old head. "Nay — but of the Devil! Wherefore, when Francis ordered that it be not touched by his children, he acted by direct command of Christ Himself."

"Even if it be the creature of the Devil, yet it can do the work of God," John persisted. "Had I money, how much good I could achieve!"

Giles folded his arms. "Wouldest thou willingly kill a man?" he asked abruptly.

John, taken aback, said nothing.

"One spoke to Francis as thou speakest to me, and thus he answered: 'If thou have money thou must have weapons to defend it. All the wars in the world are fought in defense of wealth. If thou have wealth, thou must either shed blood or cause

blood to be shed; which is not becoming a creature of God.'"

There was a moment's pause. Brother Thomas had drawn near and had been listening with relish to the dialogue. Now he murmured to himself thoughtfully: — "Property the cause of war. It is true, it is true."

But John returned to the attack.

"Our brothers are holy. Full of love they are and free from greed. Were not the perilous thing safer in their hands than elsewhere?"

Brother Giles lifted sardonic eyebrows. "Hold thou to it, brother, since thou art hardy and of a good courage. I, poor sinner, will keep safe and pure. Naught will I have which can give me power over my fellow men."

"Is it always wrong to possess power?" John's musings in Rome returned to him.

There was a slight scornful movement of the ecstatic's nostrils. "Holy Jesu, blessed Babe and God Omnipotent, Thou couldest have saved man by Thy power, but Thou didst choose to save him by love and littleness!" he said fervently.

John tried a flank movement. "We who serve Madonna Poverty might each be poor himself, but allow our friends to build us great convents for the glory of God," he suggested demurely.

"Go to Brother Elias!" Giles exploded. He stamped, looking at that moment like nothing but an angry old peasant; then with a sudden turn to hilarity,

waved his short arms at the landscape. "See our convent! Is it not large enough?"

"Aye," John agreed, "but it gives us no books nor means of learning. How without learning shall we know the mind of Christ?"

Brother Giles had turned serious. "He who saw the Seraph Crucified needed no fellowship of cherubim. Infused science seeks no help from lecture halls," said he incisively.

John bowed his head with respect. This absurdly simple dialogue was straightening out some intricacies for him. But with English tenacity he resumed.

"Holy brothers think otherwise. Brother Adam Marsh, Brother Alexander Hales, Brother Aymon, young Brother Bonaventura — these are men free from lust of ownership; they are free from pride or power. But to belief in use they cling, and to belief in learning."

"Paris, Paris!" Giles almost snarled, under his breath. Yet for the first time he seemed hesitant. "I judge no man," muttered he. "Thoughts change like clouds. Those black demon clouds above may be white angels soon. But this is a hard saying, whereof the secret is known only to Brother Sun. I judge no man," he repeated, now speaking clearly, "but this I know: he who desires aught, is owned. He alone who hath naught and desireth naught, possesseth all things."

Facing suddenly about, he pressed his face close to John and peered into his eyes. Apparently he liked what he found there, for he burst into delighted laughter.

"Seek no longer to tease thine old brother. Thou art no advocate of the devil's party. Thou art true lover of Holy Poverty. And I perceive," he was speaking slowly and intently, "I perceive that she shall show thee great honor, and cause thee to suffer much for her sake."

So saying, he encircled John with his arms, and held him for a moment in close embrace; then, releasing him, laughed long and low, with delicious inward laughter. John laughed also, and the two held hands, the old brother and the young, and swayed back and forth among the cabbages. A glint of sun struck through the scurrying black clouds, and transformed the black dust they kicked up into a halo around their bare feet.

Brother Thomas, who was a dignified person, looked on with pleasure. He could not have done it himself, but he was well used to the antics of his brothers, especially in Italy.

As for John, surely he knew perfect joy in that moment. None of those old doubts which had bound his spirit for so long had been resolved, but he had laughed at them, and laughter can turn chains of lead into chains of flowers. The *Jubilo* rose in his heart. He broke into a sort of chant. Brother Giles took it up, and the two chanted in antiphon.

"Poverty is a secret heaven, concealed from those who dwell content amid the shadows of the earth," John chanted.

"Aye! Of her heavens there are three. The heaven

of the stars is first." This was Brother Giles, but John resumed: —

"There man is free from earthly goods, from riches, from knowledge, and from fame. Escape these things, you mount aloft into the starry heaven."

An instant's pause; and Giles went on, swaying with a wider sweep.

"A second heaven waits, the crystalline, above the four great winds that toss the spirit's sea, above both fear and hope, and grief and joy."

John's heart soared above storms, and he continued: —

"To fear not Hell, to have no hope of Heaven, and to count grief and joy as one, if only Love endure — this is to know that heaven crystalline."

Brother Giles' voice dropped; he chanted under his breath: —

"Yet the third Heaven is still higher far; and few there be received within that peace."

"That Heaven is made firm in Nothingness." John's interposed voice was even lower than Giles'. It died away, though he still swayed to the rhythm. And from now to the end, Brother Giles alone sustained the mystical burden: —

"There in the empyrean doth love abide in truth. There that which seems is not, so high is all that Is. There Christ is all in all, and our contentions die, transformed each into each in wondrous unity. No name this Heaven hath, no term nor measurement. There ends the long debate where love imprisoned lives,

amid our darkened lights; for till new wisdom dawn, our light is night."

A pause. The movement became swifter again.

"There love lives without desire; there is wisdom without thought. There I live, and yet not I, and myself is not myself. And I feel what I felt not; what I knew not, that I know. There is faith all lost in sight; hope must to possession yield; night is made into bright day; love in weakness perfected.

"Poverty is to have naught. Poverty possesses all, in the joy of liberty."

And now Brother Giles' movements ceased. He dropped John's hands. John and Brother Thomas listened, heads bowed, hands crossed upon their breasts, while, immobile, with unseeing eyes, Brother Giles pursued his theme: —

"The soul has leaped over the starry sky where virtues shine, over the crystal Heaven above desire. It has transcended even purity.

"Borne upward by the seraph wings around the Crucified, in the third Heaven it has found the ardor of the seraphim. Thy heart is stilled; willing, thou willest not, save union with that Beauty Uncreate.

"As wax is lost in flame, its being given up that dying it may live, giver of life and light, so is the soul at once Victim and Victor known. Thou runnest if thou goest not; the more thou givest the more still thou hast. Give all, and thou hast all. Thine is the Great Creator.

"There is at last no height, nor breadth, nor depth. Thou dost climb most when thou dost most descend.

Thy depth is height, thy loss to thee is gain. O sea profound, how lofty thine abyss! O mountain peak, thine are the depths of sky! High Naughting — thine the power whereby we soar, we plunge, into the Infinite!"

The cracked voice ceased. Brother Giles' face, turned upward, seemed as the landscape seemed, bathed in light from other spheres. They left him oblivious of earth, while the sky in its Umbrian fashion suddenly enshrined his spare figure in a sunshine from which every cloud had vanished, and in which even the shadows of the cabbages had a radiance of their own.

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE: AT LIBERTY

The circle of light had slipped across the wall; had vanished. Brother John had sunk in extreme weakness to the floor. He lay prostrate on the dank flags, his emaciated arms flung out cross-wise.

The scenes of his youth, which he had just relived, rapt in what seemed more than memory, had been now bright, now dim. Now they had been to him as a renewed present in which he played his part, now as a story from a book, in which his own figure was as strange to him as another's. He had heard, even more vividly than he had seen, that vanished past. Again he had listened to that Christmas singing in the Cornish forest, to the grave tones of Brother Adam Marsh, to Roger Bacon's incisive speech. Those pure Italian accents of Brother Bernard, Brother Rufino, Brother Angelo, which had charmed his English ear, fell on it once more. And the talk of Brother Thomas, with its ironical cadences, its undertones of sadness and love. And his own answering voice.

This retrospect — if retrospect it were, and not retreat into an eternal Now — had moved as it were to rhythm; now flowing, melodious, majestic, now

broken, turbulent. Through this rhythm John felt the vibrations of a mighty harmony, in which his little life bore its small part.

The rhythm ceased. It had merged at the last into Brother Giles' chanting. All the voices were silent. John of Sanfort, once more confined within his exhausted body, lay dying in the prison. Dying? Yes, he grew peacefully aware that this was the adventure now before him.

Memories, no longer coherent or vivid, not quickened into perceptions any more, stirred languidly in his mind. Painfully he caught at one or another, recalling in fragments, but not seeing or reliving, his life of the past twenty years. For well-nigh twenty years had passed since that hour of ecstasy with Brother Giles on the slopes of Monte Ripido.

They had been good years. He had kept the faith. He had remained without wavering united to that party of the Zealots, which, after the deposition of Brother Elias, had become more and more a definitely conscious group, bent on preserving to the limit literal obedience to Francis and to the Rule of Poverty, against the stubborn opposition of the majority in the Order. They had known their moments of triumph, their years of defeat; and they had never faltered. The anger of their own brethren had more than once consigned some of them, as he and his friends were consigned now, to prison and to death.

He had kept the faith. But was it the true faith? Alas, Brother John had never been sure! His heart

was sad. Had not Brother Bonaventura chosen the better way — Brother Bonaventura, now the Minister-General of the Order, Bonaventura the saintly, the learned, Bonaventura, loved and honored of all men, friends and foes?

Wealth, wisdom, power — John had discarded them long ago, discerning in them the insidious hint of private greed. Fear, hope, joy, and pain had seemed at times to lose their meaning. But still he shrank from that last depth of Poverty into which he had been vouchsafed a glimpse at La Verna. It seemed one must abandon confidence that one's life had not been given in vain. So should pride be driven from its most hidden lair, so should trust in self die utterly. So, in the lowest depth, the Everlasting Arms received him, and he knew in penitential peace the all-sufficiency of God!

Strange how faintly, intermittently, events and persons of the last twenty years were occurring to his mind! Strange, when all those crucial months of his early life as a friar had been so clear!

There was the time when, one of seventy-two dear and loyal brothers, — Brother Lucido among them, — he had been sent by his party to report to the Pope the gross mismanagement of the Order by the then Minister-General, Crescentius. That had been fifteen years ago. And they were circumvented by force and guile, not even allowed to see the Holy Father, scattered, exiled. John had seen Cornwall again. He had seen his uncle, Father Philip, still scornful, still

aggrieved. With Brother Gilbert he had tended lepers not far from his old home.

Happier days had come. John of Parma, the blessed, the holy, had succeeded Crescentius. And he had recalled the seventy-two, had sought to restore the Rule to its purity. "Brother, you come welcome; but ah! you come late!" old Brother Giles had cried. Yes, happier days. John, lying in his weakness, gave thanks once more for the glorious rectitude, the true love of poverty, in that faithful son of Francis, and sent his thoughts to the little mountain hermitage of Greccio, where John of Parma was now passing his days in disgrace which was glory. For the other forces had risen and triumphed again, and the conflict which had brought John and his friends to this prison had forced John of Parma to resign as Minister-General.

It had centred, that conflict, in the great Apocalyptic ideal based on the writings of the Abbot Joachim, which had exalted John in his youth. How that faith in the imminent Age of the Spirit had spread among the Zealots — how they had clung to it! This faith, first given to John by his dying friend Pierre, had been his own support through difficult years.

It had been John who had first shown Brother Gherardo di San Donnino the cherished parchment, bequeathed to him by Pierre, and had wakened his ardor. Feeble fingers touched lovingly, with failing strength, that very parchment, still hidden in his habit's folds. What a splendid book Brother Gherardo had written, a book talked over in its every page with John!

Inspired by Abbot Joachim, it went further; it showed with astounding courage how the sons of Francis, if only true to poverty and to their Founder, might inaugurate the coming age! A book given passionate welcome far and wide among the finer brothers. A dangerous book! So had judged, at least, the University of Paris, seat of accepted learning, always suspicious of the popularity of the friars. So had asserted the University champion, William de St. Amour, with scathing eloquence. That had been a great controversy. It had caused the deposition of Brother John of Parma, himself a Joachimite avowed. It was the reason why John, with Brother Gherardo and Brothers Leonardo and Piero, sang their Easter Lauds in prison. Five years they had been there. Brother Bonaventura was largely responsible.

They were not the only ones to suffer in those hot days. Brother Roger Bacon, too. He had been forbidden by his superiors, Brother Roger, — long since professed as a friar, — to publish any book out of the Order, under penalty of being put on bread and water if he rebelled. John felt hot as he thought of it; Bacon's free spirit bound! His own life had moved in different orbits from that of his early friend, but never had Bacon become indifferent to him.

Well, Bonaventura, the excellent, the safe, had succeeded John of Parma. Was not Brother Bonaventura the wisest of them all, and not with mere earthly wisdom? The question would not down in John's troubled mind. Bonaventura had followed the genu-

ine way of poverty, with just enough compromise to secure freedom and peace. Brother James of Massa had had an awful vision in which he saw Brother Bonaventura with claws. John had had no such vision. He esteemed Brother Bonaventura a true and holy man.

What had Brother Aymon said, one day in Rome, years ago? Something about two young men on whom he had his eye, who might become leaders of the Order. Well, Bonaventura had arrived, was acclaimed leader. He, John, lay dying a futile death. "Holy Poverty, teach me the Secret of Naughting!"

He was gone long since, Brother Aymon. Made Minister-Provincial of England, in spite of John's efforts, at that chapter which had deposed Brother Elias, and Minister-General too, only a year later. How many were gone, of those earlier days! Brother Adam Marsh had died just the preceding year, in 1258. Soon John himself would be with them. What had some one — Brother Rufino? — said about the tests of love? That always they demanded the hardest thing. The hardest thing for Brother Aymon was to oppose his friends. Not only in regard to Brother Elias; other times also he had had to do it. John felt an extraordinary warmth of sympathy for Brother Aymon as he looked back.

A pity in a way, thought Brother John, that he was dying. Could he have lived one little year more, he might have seen the real dawn of the New Age. For it was surely predicted for the next year, for 1260.

Brothers everywhere, the leal, the faithful, were waiting, John knew, for that great day. But would it surely dawn? Or might these hopes betray?

"Though the vision tarry it shall come; for it shall surely come, it shall not tarry."

John was growing momently weaker. He clung to the thread of his thinking; it grew tenuous; it was slipping from his grasp, as time itself was slipping into eternity. And always insistent recurrent questions were teasing his mind. John would like to be honest with himself, even at the point of death.

Was it possible, as the Spirituals, the Zealots, thought, to escape wholly that craving greed, the clinging to the proprium? Ah, how minds had worked during these twenty years! Over the limits of possession and use. Over definition of that "poor use" which alone was sanctioned. Over endless applications and decisions concerning the length of a tunic, the covering for the feet, the regulation of fasts. Worked in meticulous effort to discover where the true lover of poverty was justified in drawing the line. It all looked rather absurd, as John lay there. Did he hear, far away, the sweet tinkle of angelic laughter?

That laughter was loving, he knew. The angels might be amused, but they understood. They knew, as he did, that what he and his friends had suffered to preserve was something infinitely precious, something of angelic nature. At present, men apparently could not avoid private ownership; must guard it jealously, must even insist on the rights of property as sacred;

otherwise society would fall to pieces. But the time would come when such necessity should cease. Love should so work through the common life that "mine" should be lost in "ours," in "yours."

Perhaps next year? Perhaps in 1260?

Though the vision tarry, it shall come! "O Christ, Thou Father of the future age! Restore our lot!" cried John, losing himself in prayer. As he lay motionless on the flags, came that strange welcome little tingling in palms and feet and side, first felt on the night of his profession as a friar.

Till the day of the Spirit should dawn indeed, the Seraph Crucified must be the guardian of those who held this faith and sought to live by it. All through these years the helplessness of the Cross had meant more to John than even its agony. The helplessness of love, borne upward on the wings that united Heaven and earth.

Would the Church as a whole ever behold that Seraph? Ever be pierced by its darts? Or would she continue to shrink in helplessness, and to scorn and imprison her children who beheld?

Pope Gregory was dead, and Frederick, the great Emperor. But still went on the tussle between Empire and Church; still the Church sought to conquer the world by adopting the world's weapons. How long, O Lord, how long?

Some day the ideals of Francis should triumph. Some day reward and labor should be severed, and the full law of Christ should be followed by the Church

which bore Christ's name. Then should the Church be crucified by the world, raised to the highest honor, to the gibbet of the Cross.

The sons of Francis! Lovers of Poverty because lovers of men! The soul of the Church to be! Could sight go further? Could it discern a whole world redeemed, a world of brotherhood without greed, of freedom fulfilled in love, the commonwealth of God? Yes. But on earth? Or in Heaven? John was very weary. It snapped — that thread of thought.

Faces, faces! The face of Pierre, whole and clean once more. The face of Adam Marsh. The dear face of Brother Bernard. Other faces, unknown, but fair — had they all come out of the great tribulation?

Voices: —

"God's Wisdom, mad with love, adore!
Be pain thy joy, be shame thy pride!
All earthly good shalt thou ignore,
O soul for whom His love has died."

Brother Gherardo? No, not that thin though happy voice of the prisoner.

A child's face, with long golden curls. The little sister, whose hair John had once liked to twine round his fingers —

It was gone. Celestial voices were chanting in full chorus: —

"When man is brought to Nothingness,
In him is born the eye to see.
Then first he feels his endless bliss,
No tongue can tell this mystery."

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John was buried with Christ in His sepulchre. He had come from the sea to the shore.

The jailer was making his rounds with a new assistant. The assistant, with a light, entered John's cell.

"Messer Pitro! Here is a friar lying dead," he called.

Pitro came in and bent over the body, looking sorry.

"Tck, tck — it is Brother John, the Englishman. He was the cheerfullest of them all. They are a queer lot. They sing all the time. Why do they throw their lives away?"

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AUTHOR
Scudder, Vida D.

TITLE
Brother John

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME	DATE RETURNED

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